

CAN PROGRESSIVES CHOOSE SCHOOL CHOICE?  
April 3-16, 1995

# IN THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

## NATURAL BORN KILLERS

Conservatives  
attack the  
Endangered  
Species Act

\$2.50/CANADA \$3.00



Paul Stanton Kibel reports



# EDITORIAL

## SOMETHING TO VOTE FOR

It's common knowledge that when Republicans swept into control of the House and Senate last November, fewer than 40 percent of eligible voters went to the polls. This unusually low level of voter interest was, however, not universal. As recently released figures show, it varied greatly across lines of ethnicity and class. African-Americans, who make up 11.8 percent of the U.S. population, made up only 9 percent of the 1994 electorate, and Hispanics, who make up 9.6 percent of the population, provided only 3 percent of voters.

These disparities, significant though they are, are dwarfed by the difference in turnout between wealthy Americans and lower- and middle-income working people. Only 4.6 percent of the population have incomes of more than \$75,000, yet this group made up 16 percent of last year's voting population. And although only 12.8 percent of Americans make more than \$50,000 a year, that group accounted for 38 percent of the voters in November.

*By appealing to those Americans who already vote, the Democrats are driving their natural constituency away from the ballot box.*

Those figures alone are enough to explain the Republican mid-term sweep, since wealthy voters lean heavily toward Republicans while the poor tend to vote Democratic.

But they also point clearly to the Democratic Party's only possible salvation. The working and non-working poor make up 37.4 percent of the population, but only 10 percent of voters. If half of them had voted in November, the House and Senate would still be Democratic. Yet President Clinton and his Democratic Leadership Council cohorts insist on

the suicidal path of attempting to appeal to the narrow range of Americans who already vote.

The stupidity of this strategy is highlighted not only by the fact that a large majority of Americans disagree with the core positions of the Republican Contract with America (see Editorial, March 20), but also by House Speaker Newt Gingrich's negative ratings, which surpass those of almost every other political figure. A *New York Times* poll in February found that a mere 22 percent viewed Gingrich positively while 33 percent viewed him negatively. A second poll in March by the *Wall Street Journal* and NBC News found only 27 percent felt positively about Newt

while only 41 percent felt negatively.

In interviews with voters in the heavily Republican Philadelphia suburb of Broomall, the *New York Times* reported in mid-March, professed Republicans expressed strong anti-Newt feelings. One 48-year-old nurse told the *Times* that she didn't "think [Gingrich] understands life. He wants to stop supporting food programs for schools. Why starve the kids? And welfare. You can't just pull the plug on people." Another woman, a 47-year-old waitress, interviewed as she was heading into a Kmart, said "I think he's a slime. I don't trust him as far as I can see him." Democratic pollster Mark Mellman told the *Times* that he doesn't "think there's ever been anyone who's become unpopular so fast without being a mass murderer."

The truth is that the American people are only minimally represented in government because neither party speaks to the interests of the majority. The Democrats' solution, to the extent that they have one, has been to make it easier to register and vote. But few people vote simply as a civic duty. If the Democrats give the people something to vote for, Newt's revolution will go down in flames at the next election. If not, we're in for a long cold winter. ◀

## IN THESE TIMES HIRES TWO NEW EDITORS

We are pleased to announce that Chris Lehmann has joined our staff as culture editor and Dave Mulcahey as assistant managing editor. Lehmann comes to us from San Francisco, where he worked as assistant editor of *Tikkun*, and then as associate editor of *California Lawyer*. Among other duties, he will be responsible for the books section, which we expect to expand and improve under his direction. Mulcahey, who will be working part-time for *In These Times*, is also an editor at the Chicago-based journal *The Baffler* and was a frequent contributor to the late and great University of Chicago-based weekly, *The Grey City Journal*.

## IN THESE TIMES

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# LETTERS

## Forward looking

David Moberg's reporting on labor is far and away the best since William Serin left the *New York Times*, but I find his analysis of the Dunlop Commission's report on the future of labor-management relations unconvincing (*ITT*, February 6). Like *Labor Notes* and many trade unionists, Moberg sees the tree but misses the forest. Moberg forgets that the law, as Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. said, should be based on experience, not logic. Radical logic and rigid ideology might lead one to conclude that the commission report promotes cooperative labor-management arrangements whose primary purpose is to intensify the exploitation of labor. But the historical record suggests that the report offers a great deal more to workers and unions than they have been promised since the passage of the Wagner Act in 1935.

Moberg and other critics focus only on the commission's proposed modification of Section 8(a)(2) of the National Labor Relations Act, the clause that out-

lawed company unions—and they fail even to see that clause clearly. True, the commission recommended that Section 8(a)(2) be amended to enable employers and employees to create non-union worker participation plans. The resulting bodies might discuss wages and working conditions (subjects normally reserved for formal collective bargaining) along with other matters more properly within the scope of such cooperative plans, without violating the ban on company unions. And yes, the only labor representative on the commission, Douglas Fraser, former president of the United Auto Workers, filed a dissent to that recommendation.

Yet the report emphasizes that its recommendation to modify Section 8(a)(2) is not intended to enable, much less encourage, employers to create new forms of company unions. Indeed, the commission stresses that worker participation in management works best when employees are represented by independent unions—or, in the absence of independent representation, by representa-

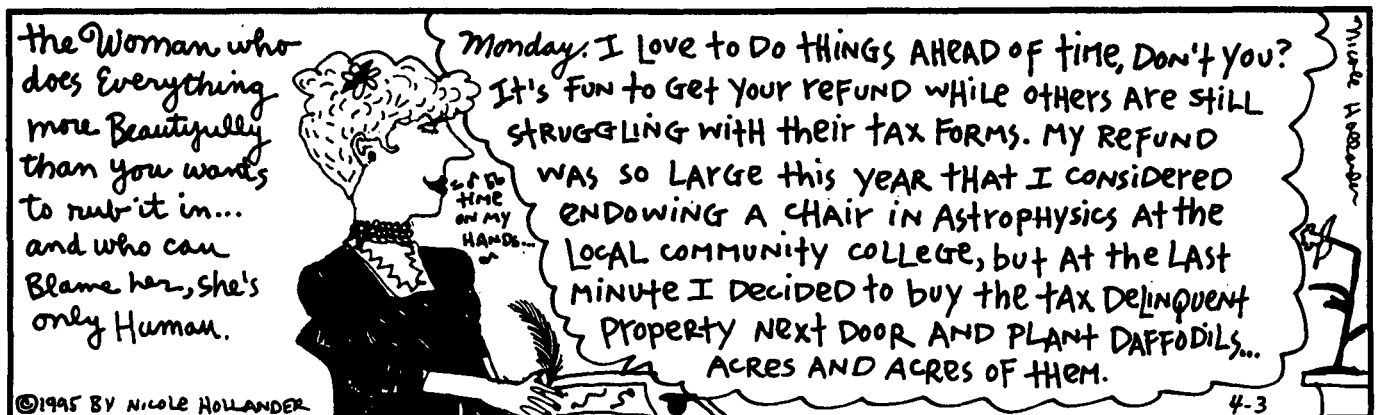
tives free of managerial coercion or penalty for speaking their minds. To focus on this aspect of the report, however, is to lose sight of its far more progressive recommendations.

Moberg believes that the commission members misunderstand contemporary industrial relations, that they see management-labor harmony and cooperation where, in reality, management wages war to destroy unions and exploit workers. Moberg is wrong. What the commission sees today, and what it admits has happened over the past 20 years, is a weakening of trade unions, an intensifying of employee insecurity, and a widening gap in income between the highly educated and the less fortunate. The commission would love to return to the world of 1950s-style industrial pluralism and the affluent society that it helped create. Yet even in the best of worlds the commission understands that the relationship between workers and employers is at root conflictual, and that the best one can hope to achieve is a form of "antagonistic cooperation." The commission proposes to liberate workers from managerial domination and judicial repression by restoring the original promise of the Wagner Act to allow workers to build unions of their own choosing.

To achieve that goal, the report proposes, first, that no more than two weeks pass between the government's decision that an adequate number of workers have signed union cards and the holding of a representation election. Quicker elections, the commission con-

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander





cluded, would strip employers of their most effective anti-union weapons.

Second, it proposes that disputes over the scope of the bargaining unit be postponed until after a representation election, for to delay an election until jurisdictional lines have been established is to give employers an opportunity to coerce workers and discharge activists. Much like John L. Lewis and Sidney Hillman in the '30s, who told the old-line AFL craft unionists to organize first and decide craft jurisdiction later, the Dunlop Commission says, vote first and create bargaining units afterwards.

Third, it suggests that union organizers be allowed to obtain immediate injunctive relief against employers who punish workers during organizing campaigns, and that such employers not only be enjoined promptly from engaging in anti-union activities but that they also pay substantial penalties. Fourth, the commission concludes that union organizers must be provided easier access to potential recruits. It specifically calls for the reversal of judicial decisions that have barred union access to workers in quasi-public spaces such as malls and plazas.

Fifth, it elaborates a negotiating process that ensures that bargaining terminates in an actual contract. Sixth, the report observes that in contemporary workplaces, the line between supervisors and supervised has become blurred, and that supervisors should be allowed to form unions of their own, and, in some cases, to join existing unions. The commission also suggests that unionized enterprises should not be allowed to create non-union subsidiaries not bound by the requirements of the parent company. Were there any chance that the current Congress would act positively on the report, I would analyze the recommendations in more detail. But in a Republican Congress, this report is dead on delivery.

Still, the report offers an important challenge to American unions. As Tom Kochan, a commission member, wrote about the report: "The labor movement has an important choice to make. It can oppose the commission's recommendations because of its view that the

expanded flexibility recommended for employee participation will be used to further undermine union organizing efforts. Or it can voice its concern with this particular recommendation [as Fraser did] but accept this challenge provided the other recommendations are also implemented. ... If, however, labor leaders oppose these changes and stay with a more limited strategy, unions risk further declines in both their public image and membership."

As Kochan notes, American "[w]orkers, not labor or management representatives, appear to be calling for institutions that resemble representative councils similar to the European-style works councils." I agree with Kochan that American workers who unconsciously seek to adopt a progressive European model are more advanced than their union leaders, whose gaze, as so often has been the case with their movement ancestors, remains resolutely fixed on the past.

**Melvyn Dubofsky**

Distinguished Professor of History  
and Sociology  
Binghamton University, SUNY

*David Moberg replies:* My only quibble with the Dunlop Commission proposals for union representation elections is that they don't go far enough. For example, the commissioners should have advocated recognition of a union without an election if it obtains a supermajority of signed membership cards. They also should have recommended that union organizers at least be given access to the workplace to counterbalance management's "captive audience" indoctrination sessions. But otherwise I fully agree with Dubofsky that the commission's proposals on union organization are both good and, for now, dead.

However, I disagree on the merits of revising Section 8(a)(2) of the National Labor Relations Act. It is not necessary to change the law to implement employee involvement plans, as even the National Association of Manufacturers and the pro-management Labor Policy Association stated in 1987. If that long-established prohibition on company unions is greatly weakened, it will foster

*management-controlled workplace entities that will further undermine the possibility of legitimate unions or other collective organizations under worker control. It is true that many workers do not see unions as a solution to their problems and that they support some kind of cooperative arrangement with management. But there is no evidence of a groundswell of worker support for European-style works councils, as the Kochan quote implies. Nor is there evidence that management is thwarted by the law from cooperating with workers. In fact, evidence from studies cited by the commission indicates that many workers are so intimidated by management hostility that they think the only road open to them is a tame form of cooperation. I agree that works councils like those that exist in Europe would be good, but here—even more than in Europe—they would need a strong labor movement to succeed.*

Ultimately, the political strategy of the Dunlop Commission is fatally flawed. There is at present little support for works councils among workers, managers or legislators—only among a few academics. Instead, there is a strong movement among the Republicans who control Congress to pass legislation that would permit company-dominated workplace committees to discuss wages, hours and working conditions, which are now the province of unions. The implicit political strategy behind the Dunlop Commission report is that if labor gives a little on cooperation and company unions, management will then go along with the reforms easing union organizing. Instead, the Dunlop Commission will end up giving cover to the Republicans while unions gain nothing. Workers will be no closer to independent representation, real participation in the workplace and the other goals Kochan says they want.

There is no need to be wedded to past models of unions, but one thing is key: workers must have democratic rights and real power if they are going to make cooperation mean something more than acquiescence to management.

# InSHORT

## PUTTING GENES BACK IN THE BOTTLE

Last month, in a surprise victory of ethical considerations over commercial profit, the European Parliament solidly rejected a directive that would have allowed the patenting of human genes, body parts, gene therapies, genetically altered animals and other forms of life. The 240-to-188 vote was a stunning victory for the Greens in the European Parliament, who have fought the industry-backed directive since it began its tortuous path through the European Union's (EU) legislative process in 1988. (A directive is a form of legislation that requires the EU's 15 member-states to adopt corresponding legislation of their own.)

Industry spokesmen were aghast at the outcome. The European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industry Associations issued a statement calling the vote "a severe blow to investments and job prospects within the European pharmaceutical industry." The mirage of job creation and the specter of U.S. and Japanese competition are the industry's usual arguments for getting its way. The failure of those arguments this time is exceptional. One reason must be the overconfidence of the biotechnology industry's friends in the Commission, the EU's administration in Brussels that drafts legislation, and the Council, a body made up of cabinet ministers of member-states that shares legislative powers with the European Parliament.

Overly sure of themselves, the patenting advocates introduced a few details into the crucial final text that



Tree of strife: The Green Group's Linda Bullard stands next to the "patented" Neem tree.

© MICHAEL D. IVEY



### Back on the chain gang

If Alabama Gov. Fob James gets his way, state residents will soon enjoy cleaner highways thanks to the revival of an old Alabama tradition, chain gangs, the Associated



Press reports. This spring, groups of prisoners in freshly minted leg

irons will be put to work cleaning up litter along the state's main roads. Donald Claxton, the governor's spokesman, explains that the program will help to challenge the perception among many state residents "that all inmates do is watch soap operas and drink Coca-Colas."

### Hello Dolly!

After being heavily criticized for her very public, if not very successful, campaign for health care reform, Hillary Clinton is apparently trying to soften her image. And she's



taken up a new role model as well. "In a variation from frequent refer-

ences to her admiration for Eleanor Roosevelt," the *New York Times* recently reported, the more-ladylike First Lady now says that "Dolly Madison has become a great favorite of mine as I study the First Ladies."

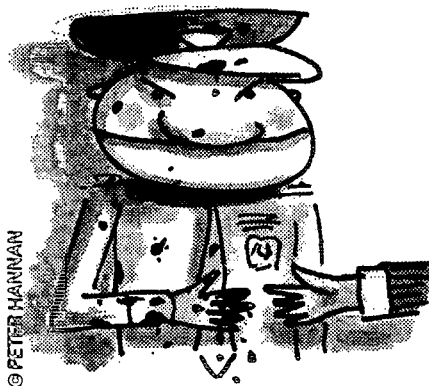
## Service with a smile

Peter Dignan, a Chicago police officer recently promoted to lieutenant for "meritorious service," is also well known for service of a different sort, the *Chicago Sun-*



*Times* reports. Dignan's name came up "repeatedly ... as connected to alleged acts

of abuse," according to a Police Department investigation. Dignan is also one of four officers who was charged in the beating and torture of murder suspect Gregory Banks, whose conviction was overturned by a



state appellate court because his confession was coerced. "We no longer see cases involving the use of the rack and thumbscrews to obtain confessions," the court wrote at the time. "We are [instead] seeing cases like the present case involving punching, kicking and placing a plastic bag over a suspect's head to obtain confessions."

### APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Models Inc.—redible!
2. Infomercial Irritating
3. Plausibly deniable
4. L.A.P.D. blue
5. Bob Dole-icious
6. Raoul Cédras-tic
7. Ollie North nasty
8. Holiday in Rwanda
9. Zhirinovskyesque
10. Where have you gone, Joe Goebbels?

troubled many undecided Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). The final text would have allowed patenting of human body parts. It also would have accepted patenting of highly controversial germ-line gene therapy, which alters the genetic identity not only of individuals but of unborn generations. Even the widely backed "farmers' rights" clause—which ensured that farmers would not have to pay licensing fees for reproduction of patented plants or livestock—was dropped from the compromise.

Over the years, Greens have made resistance to patents on life "their" issue, exerting far more influence than their numbers would suggest: they number only 25 out of 627 MEPs. In Austria, the Green Party recently succeeded in persuading the national parliament to register its unanimous opposition to the directive. One of the many arguments voiced by Greens just before the vote was the need to stop a U.S. government application for European patents on special disease-resistant cell lines particular to indigenous peoples in the Solomon Islands and Papua-New Guinea.

The origin of the defeated directive dates back to 1987, when the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office granted the world's first patent on an animal. Big European corporations wanted the same patent rights on the continent. In response, the Commission in Brussels in 1988 submitted a draft "Directive on Legal Protection for Biotechnological Inventions" to the European Parliament as the first step in the European Community's complex legislative process.

At the same time, a worldwide movement was developing against the privatization of the fruits of biological research. Working closely with public interest organizations and concerned researchers, the Greens set out to raise awareness of the complex ethical and social issues raised by the rapid development of genetic engineering. They argued that discoveries were being wrongly labeled as inventions, and that it was inappropriate to apply patent law—which had been designed to protect mechanical inventions—to the identification and rearrangement of genetic materials.

The Greens warned that patenting life forms would subject scientific research to commercial objectives; create unknown environmental risks by promoting large-scale releases of genetically modified organisms and the development of herbicide-resistant plants; further consolidate the takeover of agriculture by giant multinational corporations, thus deepening Third World dependency and indebtedness; and undermine the reverence for life that is an essential foundation of social ethics.

The range of disturbing issues raised brought together an unusual coalition, including farmers, animal rights activists, Third World nongovernmental organizations and religious groups. This complex consciousness-raising campaign—combined with sophisticated parliamentary maneuvers—was coordinated by Linda Bullard, the Green Group's coordinator of genetic engineering issues. In October 1993, as 500,000 farmers in India demonstrated to launch the campaign against "intellectual piracy" of the genetic resources of the South by multinational corporations, the Texas-born Bullard announced the Greens' intention to file legal opposition to the patenting of the Neem tree, symbol of the Indian campaign. The tree's many beneficial properties have been used freely in India for millennia, long before being patented in the United States by companies such as W.R. Grace and Cargill for products including pesticides and toothpaste.

Now that the EU directive has been defeated, the front line of the battle against "patents on life" moves to the European Patent Office, an entity unrelated to the European Parliament. The Greens also hope to stimulate debate in the United States. Although the U.S. Patent Office and Supreme Court have



both approved the patenting of living organisms, the U.S. Congress has yet to deal with the issue.

The unique ethical aspects of this issue explain why it has generated highly unusual resistance to the free market trends that have swept the globe in recent years. Of course, there are legitimate questions about whether the absence of patents may discourage medical research conducted by profit-oriented business. The solution to this dilemma, however, is to maintain strong research programs in the public sector that will contribute to commercial product development without being totally dominated by it. DNA cannot be left to commercial interests. The wave of privatization must stop at life itself.

—Diana Johnstone

(Diana Johnstone is the Green Group public information officer.)

## AMAZONIAN WARRIORS

Just as the dust was settling from the Mexican financial bailout and Latin America seemed "safe for investment" again, a war erupted in late January between Ecuador and Peru, reopening a half-century-old land dispute. As *In These Times* went to press, a cease-fire was in effect and the two nations were on the verge of negotiating a settlement. Although the outcome of the conflict is still unclear, the Ecuadorian military—the traditional underdog in this rivalry—is claiming a qualified victory.

Each government, naturally, blames the other for starting the conflict, and, given official disinformation efforts, casualty figures are difficult to determine. The Latin American Association of Human Rights (ALDHU) estimates that after nearly a month of war the death toll exceeds 200, that more than 20,000 people have been displaced from their homes and that 350 Indian communities have been affected. One thing is clear—the Ecuadorian air force of new Israeli- and US-made warplanes has prevailed over the more antiquated Soviet- and French-supplied Peruvian air force, having shot down three of its planes and two of its helicopters.

This war continues a bitter dispute that originated in 1941, when Peru seized more than half of Ecuador's total territory. The stakes of that war extended far beyond the immediate region: the Standard Oil Company, which backed Peru, and the Shell Oil Company, which backed Ecuador, were struggling over access to oil reserves believed to exist in the Amazon region. The Protocol of Rio de Janeiro, a peace treaty that ratified Peru's territorial conquests, was imposed in 1942. But tensions between the countries erupted again in 1947 when aerial photos revealed the existence of the hitherto unknown Cenepa River, which is situated within a 48-mile stretch of the border left undefined by the 1942 treaty. In 1981, a five-day war erupted over this disputed stretch of jungle and in 1991 the two militaries skirmished once more.

The Ecuadorian military has been fighting to hang on to strategic interests, especially a government-backed mining venture with the Canadian firm TVX Gold. But internal political considerations have also weighed heavily in the war. For Ecuadorian President Sixto Durán Ballén, the war has been a godsend. Suffering from popularity ratings as low as 10 percent due to the draconian economic measures imposed during his two-and-a-half-year rule, Durán Ballén became an overnight national hero for leading the fight for "national honor and dignity" against the "Peruvian aggressors." The entire country has been engulfed in a nationalist upsurge. Shortly after the conflict began, the Ecuadorian Congress voted to continue the army's traditional fiscal endow-

## MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

### Full-court Pressler

After decades of complaining about the heavy hand of government regulation, broadcasters may have found a legislator whose passion for deregulation actually exceeds their own. Sen. Larry Pressler (R-SD) has great plans to rewrite the Communications Act of 1934. Pressler has gotten attention recently for his attack-dog approach to public broadcasting—a bumper sticker in South Dakota, where he's up for re-election, says "Save PBS. Privatize Pressler." More far-reaching still are his proposals to lift rules on ownership of multiple stations and also on cross-ownership of production companies, cable systems and newspapers.

That's the point where some commercial broadcasters—especially network affiliates and Hollywood producers—get nervous. They fear that big broadcasters will buy up small stations, a key step in their drive to build vast entertainment empires in which they can exploit new laws that allow them to both produce and air programming.

### Murder, Inc.

Deregulation advocates, who are often also conservative family-values supporters, should consider recent TV programming.

There's the recent tabloid-talk-inspired tragedy, for instance. On an unaired episode of the *Jenny Jones Show*, one man confessed his secret attraction for another on-air. Two days later, the appalled target of his affec-



tion murdered him.

Had the show gone too far? It went only as far as a ruthless marketplace had driven it. Deregulation in the '80s made broadcast stations valuable trading chips, drove up their prices, and set off a scramble for cheap, outrageous programming that would attract viewers quickly. Tabloid TV talk shows flourished. Advertisers—once the real prudes of the broadcast business—lined up to buy time. Now, more than 50 talk shows compete for airtime, viewers and advertising dollars. So expect to see more stalking of the emotionally insecure and the pathetic on the air.

What you won't see more of, not without a strong push from regulators in any case, is educational and informational programming for children. Broadcasters had, somewhat reluctantly, begun putting money and schedules behind the occasional piece of education for kids, as a result of public pressure to enforce the Children's Television Act of 1990. But that was pre-Newt.

Apparently unafraid of regulatory fallout, for the fall season ABC dropped *Cro*, a science show produced by the same company that makes *Sesame Street*, and replaced it with—yes—a TV series based on the movie *Dumb and Dumber*. NBC dropped its teen-oriented informational show, *Name Your Adventure*. And CBS scheduled its biggest investment in kids' information, *Beakman's World*, in the week-end noontime slot that perennially gets pre-empted by sports coverage.

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ment—30 percent of the Ecuadorian government's oil royalties—for another 15 years.

While the war has been a disappointment for Peru, it has provided a respite for government and military officials recently charged with involvement in their country's multibillion-dollar cocaine trade. Nonetheless, Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, who has ruled as dictator since he dissolved the Peruvian Congress and judicial system in 1992, is now facing a major threat to his chances for re-election this April. He is under fire from his opponents, including former United Nations Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, for not competently prosecuting the war. Pérez took a highly militaristic stance and exhorted the Peruvian armed forces to be more efficient in "wiping the area clean" of Ecuadorian soldiers, a remark that caused the ALDHU to strip him of its previously awarded Leonidas Proaño Peace Prize.

Wedge in the middle of the war are the Shuar Indians, the traditional inhabitants of the contested jungle region. The border drawn between Peru and Ecuador in 1942 cut their Indian nation in half. During the past 15 years, as the number of armed clashes has increased, they have been dragged into the conflict, fighting against one another as members of the two different armies. In fact, an elite contingent of Shuar commandos has been credited as the decisive factor in Ecuador's success.

Ultimately, it remains to be seen how much either belligerent will gain or lose. On March 12, observers from the United States, Brazil, Chile and Argentina—the nations that guaranteed 1942's Rio Protocol—arrived in the area to demilitarize the border and hasten negotiations. (Significantly, the United States chose to send 96 peacekeepers, more than twice the number called for—a possible sign of heightened U.S. interest in the region.) Ecuador, which finally agreed to the terms of the Rio Protocol, will be negotiating for access to the Amazon, as it wants to set itself up as a potential Pacific port for Amazonian products, especially timber. Fujimori is not likely to be in a political position to be generous, but Peru can take heart in the fact that Ecuador, by accepting the protocol, has effectively ratified its past territorial losses to Peru.

—Paul Little

## ROUGH CUTS

By JA Reid

Relationship Tip: You will live to regret anything positive you say about former partners to current ones





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## IF THE SHOE FITS

*Doris Salcedo brings death to life*

Doris Salcedo didn't fly from Bogotá to Chicago to talk about her life—she came to give voice to the dead.

Last month, the 36-year-old Colombian artist installed two artworks in the Art Institute of Chicago to honor her country's uncounted, unnamed victims of violence. She brands her home as "one of the most violent places in the world"—admitting that "last year Rwanda did better than Colombia."

Salcedo gathered material for her work as she traveled the Colombian countryside with human rights groups that were investigating deaths tied to the government, guerillas and drug lords. While the lawyers took depositions, Salcedo asked survivors for personal mementos of *los desaparecidos* (the disappeared) to use as ingredients for her memorial sculptures. "Every time I visit a place, there are traces of a violent event," she says. "Even two years after a massacre, there's a special feeling. I'd like to bring that feeling back through objects that have the aura of pain imprinted on their surfaces."

*Atrabiliario* (Defiant) consists of three-dozen inset niches resembling reli-

ETC.

By Dave Mulcahey

## Reaganomics redux

Fifteen years ago Ronald Reagan rose to power promising the impossible, to balance the federal budget by taxing people less—and voters believed it. A special report in the March/April *Dollars & Sense* shows in detail how the Contract with America suffers from the same reality deficit.

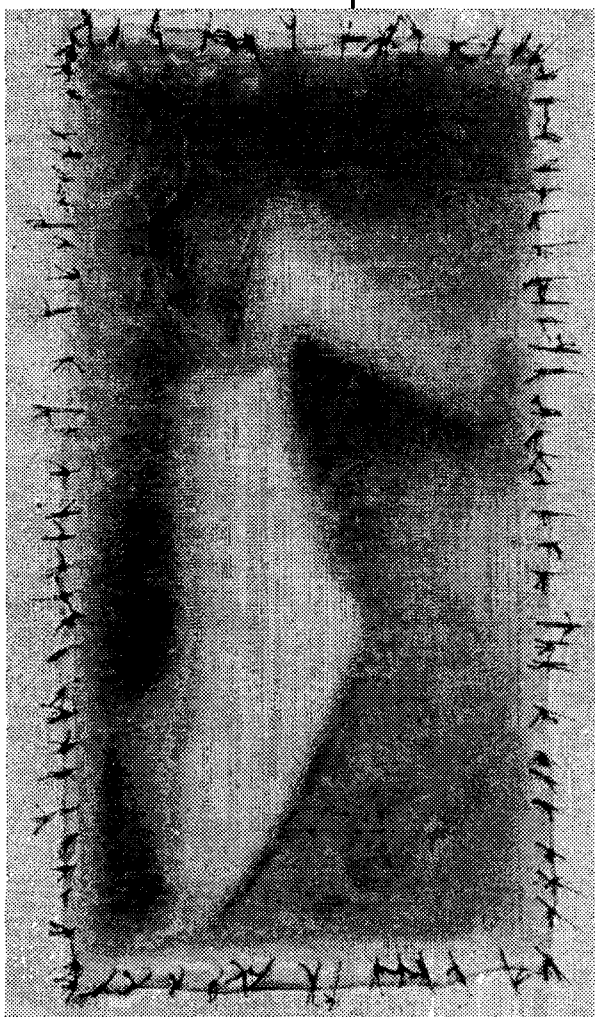
As part of the deal struck in 1986 to slash income tax rates, Reagan agreed to raise the tax rate on capital gains. At the time, of course, Republicans hoped that the capital gains tax hike would only be temporary. If they get their way this year, it will be cut significantly. The rationale is similar to the central tenet of supply-side economics: if you give rich people more money, they'll invest it in enterprises that will spur economic growth. The tax revenue generated by that growth will offset any lost receipts incurred by lowering tax rates.

Will it work? John Miller argues that in the first few years after a capital gains cut tax receipts will hold steady, a phenomenon explained by the huge rush of investors eager to cash in on long-held positions. Over the long run, however, as this frenzy subsides, receipts will drop drastically—or, to put it another way, every year tens of billions of dollars in erstwhile tax revenue will be surrendered to the rich. Under the Contract, the average tax benefit for someone earning \$40,000 a year would be \$37. Those earning in excess of \$200,000 could expect a more generous break of \$16,372.



## CityVote update

CityVote, a grass-roots organization dedicated to promoting what it calls "a national urban presidential primary" (see *ITT*, February 6), raised its profile last month, when noted news commentator Bill Moyers agreed to moderate the first of its series of nationally televised presidential debates, to be held this October in St. Paul, Minn. CityVote hopes the debates, to be kicked off months before campaign staffs make their quadrennial mass migration to Iowa and New Hampshire, will share with the nation's urban centers some of the king-making clout hogged by the rural states with early primaries and caucuses.



quaries, containing the shoes of victims. "A friend of mine was disappeared," explains Salcedo. "His mother recognized the body from a description of his shoes." Salcedo entombed each pair—though some are single shoes—behind translucent animal skin, which she stitched directly onto the museum wall with thick black thread.

Salcedo bends down to point out two delicately arched ribs that she incorporated into *La Casa Viuda VI* (The Widowed House VI), a sculpture made from a worn wooden door and an orphaned metal toy. She says she purposely placed this artwork in the path of museum visitors, but the human bones are a detail easily overlooked.

She declines to dwell on her own story, and only reluctantly speaks of a childhood of trips to Bogotá's art museum. Her father ran a small bus service. Her mother was a seamstress. Her sister is a doctor. "I had everything," she says. "I had tons of affection. Nobody was killed. I didn't have to witness any of that."

Salcedo studied art in Bogotá—"I liked the social utopianism of modernists like Piet Mondrian and the Russian Constructivists"—and went to New York University, where her early pursuit of violence as an artistic theme included studying transcripts of therapy sessions with Vietnam vets. She earned a master's degree in 1984.

Salcedo returned home and began exhibiting in Bogotá in 1985. "Once I started researching, I found that men were killed quickly, while the women were killed more slowly and brutally. You must take the dignity of the person away before you can kill them." For this reason, nearly all the shoes assembled for *Atrabiliario* once belonged to women. Salcedo discounts the role of machismo in Colombia's executions, believing that such human brutality is universal. "The American soldier in Vietnam did a pretty good job against the women in Vietnam," says Salcedo, who describes her art as "a kind of civil resistance to the currents of negativity."

"Everywhere I look I see violence," she says. "My work is a metaphor for all the violent processes around the world. I'm obsessed now."

Contrary to postmodern artists who seek to undermine the museum's hallowed aura of authority, Salcedo capitalizes on the pseudo-sacred atmosphere of a museum's marbled halls. "It's a space for ritual," she claims. "Museums are silent. You can think. That in itself is the beginning of a ritual."

Salcedo strives to restore the humanity of anonymous victims and to remind the living of their pain. "This is a process that takes centuries," says Salcedo. "Why do workers join a union? Why do people fight for a better life? Where do they get the idea of a better life?" She cites Michelangelo's *David*. "He's not a slave," she says. "He has a lot of dignity. Art can be a lesson taught to humanity."

"We're all indifferent," she concludes. "If we cease to be indifferent, things will be different."

—Bill Stamets

"About Place, Recent Art of the Americas" is on view through May 21 at the Art Institute of Chicago.

# THE FIRST STONE

## POISON RELATIONS

By Joel Bleifuss

A 20-year study in France has determined that the sperm count of men in Paris fell by 33 percent between 1973 and 1992. According to an article in the February 2 *New England Journal of Medicine*, the researchers, who examined the sperm of 1,351 healthy, fertile men, reported that "there has been a true decline in the quality of semen during the past 20 years; since the characteristics of semen from a fertile man of a given age in 1992 were significantly poorer than those of a fertile man of the same age in 1973." For its part, the *Journal* raises the likelihood that the cause of this precipitous decline in male fertility could be related to "environmental pollution."

This is just one of the most recent reports indicating that environmental contamination by chemicals that act as estrogen mimickers is wreaking havoc with the endocrine system—the network of glands that regulates growth, reproduction and the immune system. Dioxin, along with a host of other chlorinated compounds and a number of heavy metals, is one of these potent endocrine disruptors. (See "The First Stone," March 7, 1994.)

You would think that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. media would be taking this threat to the survival of the human species a little more seriously. Granted, last fall the nation's environmental watchdog did issue a reassessment that highlighted dioxin's dangers. Yet even as the agency acknowledged that danger, it obscured the fact that dioxin and other chlorinated hydrocarbons are derived primarily from chlorine-based industrial processes. The agency seems to be particularly eager to protect the polyvinyl chloride industry, which, according to a Greenpeace report released in February, is the leading source of the chlorine compounds that end up as dioxin in the environment. (See "The First Stone," March 6.) As for the media, it has been successfully cowed by the chemical industry's PR apparatus.

In my last column, I began exploring how the Chlorine Chemistry Council, a subgroup of the Chemical Manufacturers Association, had instituted a broad-based public relations effort to protect chemical manufacturers like Dow Chemical and Monsanto from the threat of federal regulations on dioxin-generating industries. In light of the serious health threat posed by estrogen mimickers and the near-total silence on this subject in the mainstream press, I am continuing that examination of the chemical industry's propaganda campaign.

In the '70s John Stauber organized around the issue of dioxin contamination of the environment by the Agent Orange herbicide 2,4,5-T, which was manufactured by both Dow Chemical and Monsanto. Today, Stauber is editor of *PR Watch* of Madison, Wis. "Monsanto and

Dow Chemical and PR firms working for them have been managing the dioxin public relations crisis for two decades," says Stauber. "Their strategy hasn't changed at all. That strategy is to deny the risk of dioxin, denigrate activists or scientists who raise concerns, and defend their product. Unfortunately, the public relations industry has been very successful."

Stauber characterizes Ketchum PR, which is the firm managing the dioxin issue for Dow, Monsanto and the Chlorine Chemistry Council, as "one of the most dangerous of the PR firms."

Ketchum has been manipulating the dioxin issue on several fronts. Last year, company president John Paluszek served as chair of the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) "Environment Section." In a letter to participants at a June 1994 PRSA "Smart Environmentalism" conference, Paluszek blathered: "The dioxin issue is about to become one of the hottest issues to face the nation—and the world. It is a paradigm case for the 'Smart Environmentalism' conference where we will discuss the hard choices, the prioritizations, that must now be based on sound science and sound economics." To put it simply, what is sound economics for the chlorine-based, dioxin-creating industry must be good for America.

In 1991, Ketchum prepared a "Crisis Management Plan" for Clorox Co., which feared becoming the object of a Greenpeace-led campaign to phase out the use of chlorine. That confidential plan, which was leaked to the press by a Ketchum employee, provides an inside look at the lengths the PR industry will go to serve its corporate clients.

The plan examines a variety of ways that the chlorine crisis could become news. In one of Ketchum's worst-case scenarios, a "prominent newspaper columnist calls for consumers to boycott Clorox products, since 'Clorox and consumers who use household liquid chlorine bleach are guilty



of widespread contamination of the environment.' ”

Ketchum's proposed PR solutions included an industry association advertising campaign titled “Stop Environmental Terrorism.” Further, Ketchum advised Clorox to “conduct research to determine if and how a slander lawsuit against the columnist and/or Greenpeace could be effective.”

That memo raises this question: Did Ketchum mastermind the \$4 million libel suit filed in 1991 against Peter Montague, the editor of *Rachel's Environment and Health Weekly*? Since 1986, Montague's influential newsletter has served as an effective bridge between medical science and environmental politics. He is currently being sued by a retired Monsanto scientist, William Gaffey.

In the late '70s, Gaffey performed a health study on workers who were exposed to the Agent Orange herbicide 2,4,5-T during a 1949 explosion at a Monsanto plant in Nitro, W.V. Gaffey's study gave Monsanto a clean bill of health. This Monsanto research was quoted approvingly by several reputable publications, including *Scientific American*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Science* and the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. As Eric Coppelino reported in the May 1994 *Lies Of Our Times*, Gaffey's study was one of three Monsanto research efforts in 1978 and 1979 that the chemical industry later used to repudiate courtroom accusations that Agent Orange was causing health problems among U.S. servicemen exposed to the dioxin-laden herbicide in Vietnam.

In effect, Monsanto's dioxin studies, and the resulting positive press coverage, set a foundation upon which chemical company executives could claim that dioxin's dangers had been overblown. But that propaganda effort was jeopardized in 1990 when two sources at the EPA leaked an agency memo about the Monsanto study. Portions of that memo were published in the March 7, 1990 *Rachel's Environment and Health Weekly*.

The EPA memo, written days earlier, on Feb. 23, 1990, warns the agency that Monsanto and Gaffey may have propagated fraudulent research. Attached to that memo was a 1989 legal brief filed in a dioxin-related lawsuit against Monsanto. That brief stated, in part, that “Gaffey [in his study of the workers exposed to dioxin during the Nitro, W.V., explosion] deliberately and knowingly omitted five deaths from the exposed group and took four workers who had been exposed and put these workers in the unexposed group, serving, of course, to decrease

the death rate in the exposed group and increase the death rate in the unexposed group.”

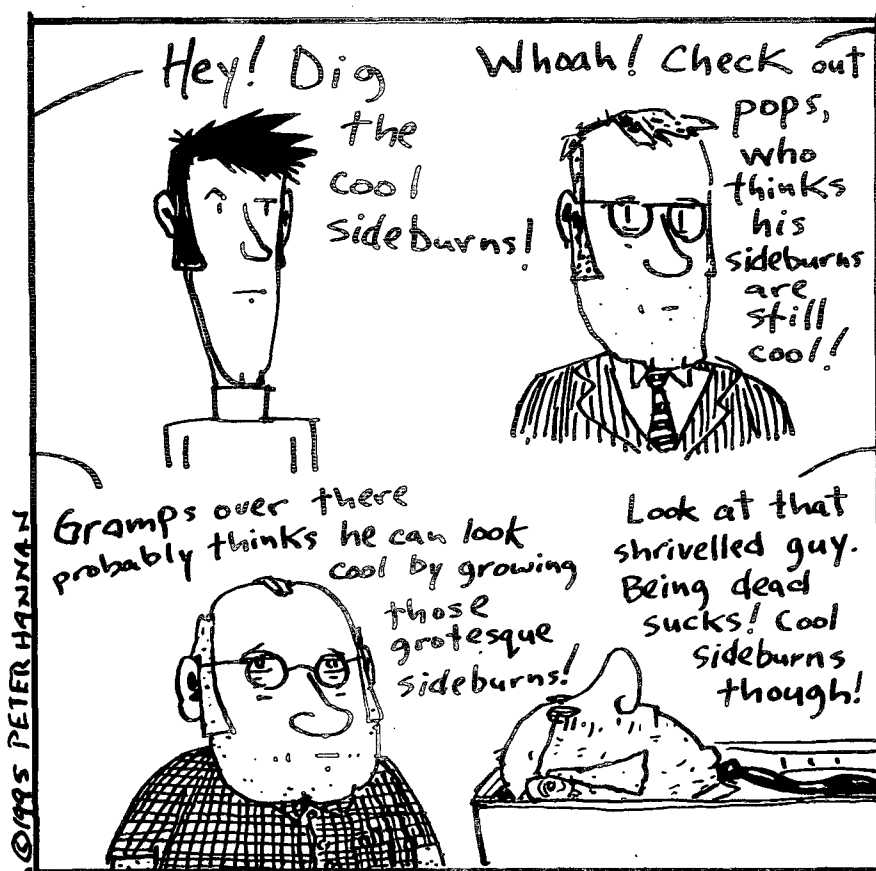
So, Montague was sued in a St. Louis federal court by Gaffey—who was represented by Monsanto lawyers—in an apparent effort to quash any reports contradicting Monsanto's dioxin studies. Gaffey claims that the legal brief quoted by Montague was “untrue and libelous.” So far the suit has been effective. Not surprisingly, members of the mainstream press have shown little interest in the EPA memo, fearful perhaps that they too may be sued by an industry out to protect its right to profit as it poisons the environment.

As for the chemical industry's good name, it has suffered a blow with the EPA's dioxin reassessment. But not a mortal one, if Dow Chemical's vice president for environment, health and safety, David Buzzelli, has his way. Buzzelli, the co-chair of President Clinton's Council on Sustainable Development, told *Chemical and Engineering News* last November that he expects the Chlorine Chemistry Council's 1995 annual budget to be increased from \$12 million to \$15 million, with the extra money going to fund the council's dioxin research program.

With \$3 million the council should be able to buy the services of a number of scientists like Monsanto veteran William Gaffey.

## THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



**E N V I R O N M E N T**

# Natural born killers

*The  
conservative  
assault on the  
Endangered  
Species Act is  
bad for both  
wildlife and  
human life.*

**By Paul Stanton  
Kibel**

**I**f Newt Gingrich and company have their way, the newest political scapegoat may in fact be a goat. Or if not a goat, then maybe a bear, or a condor, or an owl. In the current anti-government congressional atmosphere, a powerful coalition of ranchers, developers and manufacturers is preparing to place the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) on the butcher's block. This coalition, calling itself the "wise-use" movement, maintains that one of America's chief impediments to economic growth is our national obsession with wildlife protection.

Wise-users have chosen the ESA and wildlife protection as their political focus. Spearheaded by Rep. Don Young (R-AK), new chairman of the House Public Lands and Resources Committee, legislative efforts are under way to reverse the gains environmental protec-

tion advocates have made over the past 20 years. Despite evidence that most Americans favor strengthening environmental laws, Young is pressing forward with a package of "reforms" that is certain to facilitate and encourage ecological deterioration.

Young's ESA reforms would allow the government greater leeway in authorizing the killing of endangered species and encroachment on their habitat. Young would also give economists a central role in determining whether a species is in fact endangered and require the government to compensate private landowners for reduced property value resulting from wildlife protection measures.

In response to these congressional proposals, more than 150 environmental, Native American, scientific, business and labor groups have joined together to form the Endangered Species Coalition. Becky Dinwoodie, Northwest regional coordinator for the coalition, predicts that the "debate over reautho-

rization of the ESA promises to be the conservation fight of the century."

**T**he wise use vs. wildlife debate has been propelled to center stage largely by the recent logging controversies in the Pacific Northwest. In two lawsuits filed by the National Audubon Society in the early '90s, it was determined that the federal Bureau of Land Management, a sub-agency of the Department of the Interior, issued logging permits in violation of the ESA. These permits authorized logging of old-growth forests that were designated as critical habitat for the endangered spotted owl.

As a result of the litigation, the timber contracts were invalidated and logging was suspended until the adverse impacts on the owl's habitat could be assessed. Although Clinton's controversial Option 9 logging compromise convinced the National Audubon Society to drop the suits, this did little to dampen the animosity between the timber industry and environmentalists.

Citing the mill closures resulting from canceled logging contracts, wise-users launched a campaign to discredit wildlife protection laws. This campaign was based on two basic assumptions: first, that wildlife protection hurts the American economy; and second, that environmentalists vastly exaggerate the threats posed by industry. Not surprisingly, these arguments found a receptive audience in those communities that have been hardest hit by timber industry layoffs. Yet a critical look at the assumptions underlying the anti-ESA campaign reveals that owls—and environmentalists—are not to blame.

According to wise-use advocates, strong environmental



laws hurt the economy. A group of political scientists and economists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology decided to test this claim by assessing the impact of environmental regulations on state economies.

The study found that states with the strongest environmental laws also have the strongest economies. States that neglect to protect their environments face economic decline for a simple reason: the environmental irresponsibility of one industry negatively affects many others.

The Pacific Northwest timber industry is a prime example. The destructive clear-cutting of Pacific Northwest forests may have brought bountiful profits to the timber industry, but it has damaged many others. Commercial fishing has suffered as rivers have filled with silt from the erosion of clear-cut hillsides. Tourism has also been hurt, since visitors have little interest in visiting damaged forests. In addition, taxpayers have been forced to pay for the environmental restoration necessary to repair the damage caused by destructive logging. These cumulative losses outweigh the benefits to one particular industry, resulting in overall economic decline.

Wise-use advocates consistently blame environmental laws for the woes of the timber industry. However, any blame for the layoffs of timber workers must be directed to the industry's reckless destruction of our national forests. After generations of unsustainable harvesting, more than 95 percent of our nation's native forests have been cut down. This is why American timber companies are moving to British Columbia, Siberia and Southeast Asia and laying off American workers.

ESA opponents also claim that the law has prevented government agencies from completing vital projects—such as dams, roads and military cleanups. In fact, that hasn't happened. Between 1979 and 1991, more than 120,000 government projects were reviewed to make sure they were in compliance with the ESA. Thirty-four were terminated. This is less than .01 percent of all proposed projects. Although a few notable projects, such as logging in the spotted owl habitat, were temporarily delayed or modified, these delays and modifications have proved extremely rare. As the ESA plainly states, such measures are only required when a project is "likely to jeopardize the continued existence" of a listed species.

The second wise-use argument—that environmentalists trump up the dangers of all development projects—is equally suspect. While ranchers, developers and manufacturers maintain that threats to wildlife and species preservation are



exaggerated, scientific evidence clearly indicates otherwise. In a 1992 study, Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson concluded that, worldwide, more than 50,000 species become extinct annually, and that 10 percent of all species now on the planet will likely disappear in the next 25 years. According to Wilson, this is 10,000 times the natural rate of extinction. Moreover, of the hundreds of species listed as endangered or threatened under the ESA since 1973, most remain poised on the brink of extinction. In fact, more listed species have become extinct than have recovered since the law was enacted.

Although the wise-use critiques of the ESA are suspect, the law has been criticized even by environmentalists who acknowledge that species extinction is a real problem and that environmental protection and economic develop-

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ment are compatible goals. Much of this criticism has focused on the expense and inefficiency of the law's existing species-by-species approach. Under the current ESA scheme, separate habitat designations and recovery plans must be developed for each species listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. While these habitat designations and recovery plans are the most reliable way to ensure the survival of endangered species, they are scientifically complex and therefore expensive.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a subagency of the Interior Department, is not provided with adequate funds to fulfill its mandate under the current species-by-species ESA

scheme. As a result, the vast majority of listed species have neither critical habitat designations nor recovery plans. According to a 1992 study by the General Accounting Office, critical habitat and recovery plans have been designated for only 16 percent of the listed species.

In light of the recent congressional elections, it is highly unlikely that the ESA's budget will be increased sufficiently to complete the remaining habitat designations and recovery plans. Many wildlife protection advocates have therefore proposed shifting the ESA's focus from "species habitat" protection to "ecosystem" protection. This approach was set forth in the Studds-Dingell Bill to amend the ESA. The bill, introduced by the House Merchant Marine Fisheries Committee in 1994, was, not surprisingly, dropped by the new House Republican leadership. The Studds-Dingell Bill called for recovery plans to be developed for ecosystems that contain a number of endangered species, rather than for each listed species. Ideally, this would result in more efficient use of administrative and scientific resources, and therefore cheaper and better species protection.

Although attractive to many environmentalists, the "ecosystem" approach presents many practical problems. Most importantly, the scientific definition of ecosystem is less precise and established than that of species. In the absence of hard science, politics and economics may play a large part in defining exactly what is a unique or endangered ecosystem. With a conservative Congress in power, this political latitude could result in a narrow definition of ecosystem and, therefore, less—not more—habitat protection for endangered species.

While reforms such as the ecosystem approach entail certain political risks, they should nonetheless be given serious consideration. Realistically, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has little chance of receiving the funding it needs to fulfill its ESA obligations under the current regulatory scheme. Streamlining the habitat designation and recovery plan formulation process may be the only way to ensure that species listed under the ESA are in fact protected.

The advocates of ecosystem-based ESA reform have at least identified the real issues at stake—unsustainable development and resource exploitation. As the new Republican Congress turns its attention to the ESA, these issues must be kept at the forefront of the debate. The struggle to reform the ESA must not degenerate into blaming the species that are being driven into extinction. Rather, it must focus on improving government policies and institutions so that the ESA can more effectively protect wildlife and the environment. ◀

**Paul Stanton Kibel** is a staff lawyer for the Pacific Environment & Resources Center, an advocacy and policy group based in San Francisco.

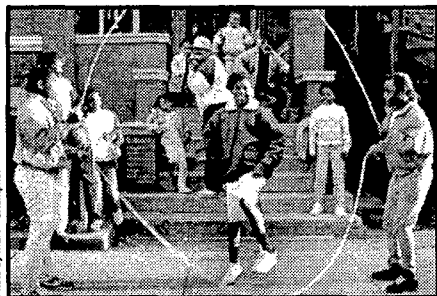


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## HEALTH CARE

# The unkindest cuts

*Health care workers are fighting the hidden costs of hospital cost-cutting.*

By David Moberg

**A**dministrators at Berkeley's Alta Bates Hospital, the largest private hospital in the East Bay area, had dramatic plans to cut costs and to introduce what they called "patient-focused care." But they had a strange notion of how to help their patients: the hospital planned to start by eliminating up to 40 percent of the registered nurses in two wards, replacing them with less-skilled service workers and nurse's aides—who make less than half an RN's wage.

Health care workers at the hospital protested that this was really "profit-focused care," which could endanger patients by removing properly skilled practitioners from bedside care. The California Nurses Association (CNA), allied with the United Mine Workers union and other groups, responded last September with a class action lawsuit—soon likely to be

heard by a state court—claiming "consumer fraud and deception."

The case highlights the next front in the health care battle: the battle over the quality of patient care. At stake is the question of who will make the key health care decisions—skilled health professionals or big corporations focused on profits, market shares and cost-cutting. The new struggle has the potential to inspire an alliance of health care workers and the broader community to fight for quality health care for all. Such a campaign could boost unionism in the health sector and set the stage for the next try at comprehensive reform.

With the collapse of broad-scale health care reform in Congress last year, a new and very different kind of "reform" is transforming the health care industry. Talk of comprehensive care for all has vanished, and attention these days has shifted entirely to the question of costs. When single-payer reformers talked about cutting costs, they hoped to do it by cutting administrative waste. The costs of hospital administration make up 25 percent of health costs in the United States compared to 11 percent in single-payer Canada.

The industry itself has developed its own solution to the question of costs. Recently the rise in health care costs has slowed without major cuts in overhead, and some big employers even report decreasing costs.

Unfortunately, as Deborah King, a visiting professor at Cornell University, observes, "the costs are going down not because we're reducing waste in the system, but because we're giving less care." Ironically, this new brand of "reform" is bringing about precisely those horrors that the insurance industry claimed President Clinton's plan would produce: less choice and access to care, poorer quality care, and impersonalized bureaucratic domination—in this case under the aegis of poorly regulated, profit-hungry corporations rather than "big government."

Corporatization of health care at one level has involved a massive wave of mergers and the consolidation of health care institutions, from hospitals to insurance companies, nationally and in local markets. The old "fee for service" model—the employer pays for insurance, the employee picks a provider, the insurance company reimburses costs—is rapidly disappearing. Increasingly, the health care market consists of big corporations (and some state Medicaid plans) contracting with "managed care" organizations assembled by insurance companies, hospitals or other agents. Health care "consumers" have become commodities themselves, the raw material over which corporate buyers and sellers haggle.

Sensing the prospects for cutting their costs, managed care organizations are increasingly forcing hospitals and doc-

tors to lower their prices in order to have access to patients. In some cases, providers have to agree to take care of patients for a fixed fee, thus shifting much of the risk away from insurance companies and on to doctors and hospitals.

In the '80s, the fee-for-service system served to encourage doctors and hospitals to provide more services in order to increase their fees, argues Service and Employees International Union (SEIU) associate research director Arne Anderson. Now the incentive system is being inverted, encouraging providers to reduce services in order to increase profits.

The "restructuring" of health care now under way goes far beyond finances. It penetrates into the daily working lives of doctors, nurses and other health care workers. These changes threaten profound consequences for patients. Hospitals are going to greater and greater lengths to shorten the time patients spend in hospitals, and to avoid admitting them in the first place. They have moved toward performing more work in outpatient facilities and sending patients home after brief stays—far shorter than is typical in any other industrial country.

Over the past decade private sector employment in the health care industry jumped by 50 percent to about 10 million; most of the growth was outside hospitals. Consultants now claim they can cut hospital staff by a third. Typically, this means reducing the number of registered nurses through general hospital cutbacks and by shifting their work to less-skilled employees. The ranks of RNs grew dramatically in the '80s, as hospitals turned to them, rather than higher-paid doctors, to do much of the work of caring for patients. Now hospitals want RNs themselves to give up their caring responsibilities, shifting to supervisory roles over superficially trained, poorly paid, assistants.

Kit Costello, an RN with Kaiser Permanente and a CNA board member, argues that it is important for skilled nurses to be intimately involved in the care of patients. "Acute care is sliding down the tubes," she warned, "and nobody is going to talk about it unless it's nurses, nurses with a union behind them." Last week, 1,400 SEIU nurses at Seattle's Group Health Cooperative, an HMO long supported by labor unions, struck for one day against a restructuring plan that would dismiss one-third of its RNs and hire more unlicensed workers.

In its battle against restructuring, CNA established a program called Patient Watch, which has collected together some of the horror stories that have resulted from restructuring. At one restructured hospital, a nurse's aide and licensed practical nurse were debating whether to physically restrain or to give Valium to a patient climbing out of his

bed. An RN arrived on the scene—purely by chance—and recognized the behavior as a possible sign of hypoxia, a life-threatening condition, and then ordered tests that confirmed her suspicions.

Clearly, restructuring can be dangerous to a patient's health. Thirteen different academic studies over the past decade have confirmed that hospitals with a higher proportion of skilled workers, especially nurses, produce better health outcomes. A 1994 survey of 1,786 nurses in Massachusetts attributed 15 deaths to recent restructuring efforts. Another study showed that hospitals that reduced staff by 8 percent or more were four times as likely as those that had not reduced their staff to experience increased patient sickness or death.

There are times, of course, when home or outpatient care is preferable to hospitalization. And, when appropriate, nurses are willing to share duties with aides and licensed practical nurses, Costello notes. But the decisions are increasingly made not on the basis of what's good for the patient but what's good for the bottom line. Nurses insist it is their professional duty and legal responsibility to make decisions about delegating duties based on the patient's condition and the

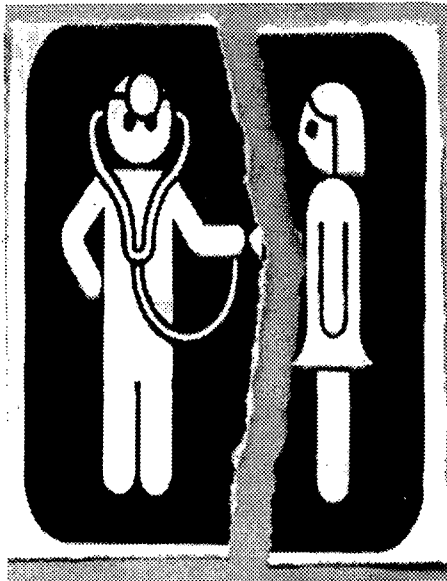
skills of the aides available.

Managed care ignores the individual and adopts "the Pinto model of health care," says CNA executive director Rose Ann DeMoro. The new standards, she points out, include a calculated risk of increased sickness and death.

Health care unions have fought restructuring to win contracts that provide job guarantees, income security and retraining. They've extended union recognition outside the hospitals proper, to the new outpatient operations that have grown so much in recent years. And they've helped to restrain the industry from further exploitation of part-time and contract workers (who already make up about 40 percent of the workforce).

Earlier this year, nurses at the University of Illinois-at Chicago Hospital won a breakthrough contract that not only protected their jobs but also gave them power to determine whether or not their duties could be delegated to others.

Yet few health care workers have a union. Only about 11 percent of the industry (including 15 percent of hospital workers) are organized, down from nearly 15 percent in 1983. Though clarification of what legally constitutes a bargaining unit seemed to open up organizing possibilities a few years ago, both doctors and nurses face other legal hurdles, such as a May 1994 Supreme Court decision that nurses may be considered supervisors (and thus ineligible to join a union). Physicians, for their part, are held back from unionizing by anti-trust restraints. And hospital administra-



tors have fought unionization with all the weapons they have available.

Not surprisingly, health care restructuring has been particularly draconian at non-union institutions. Some hospitals, as a cost-cutting measure, have gone so far as to fire all their employees, forcing them to reapply for their jobs at a lower rate of pay.

As a result of restructuring, health care workers have in recent years showed more of an interest in unionization, and organizing efforts have increased as well. SEIU, the leading health worker union, has concentrated on organizing nursing homes and home care workers. In the past several years, SEIU has organized 50,000 home care workers, many in California and Illinois. Tom Woodruff, director of the Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia region of SEIU's District 1199, reports a rising volume of calls from frustrated hospital workers. Unions are most likely to succeed, he says, if they can ally themselves with consumers, helping to overcome public suspicion that they're acting only in their narrow interest.

Woodruff commits half the region's budget to organizing, far more than most unions, but he also enlists members as organizers. "Our most effective organizing is one member going out to another and talking about building power in the industry," he explains.

In response to the convulsions in the industry, health care unions are themselves changing. CNA executive director DeMoro argues that "business unionism has kept us from becoming a formidable player in the health care debate and

in health care restructuring." Rather than accept the corporate agenda and bargain over effects, she says, unions must give workers a voice in determining how their work is organized, for the sake of both the patients and themselves.

Long fragmented and suspicious of each other, unions in the health care industry have begun to work together under the auspices of the American Health Care Coalition. Even doctors, including those at Cook County Hospital in Chicago, are talking more openly about forming unions, according to Daniel Lawlor, a doctor and AFSCME vice president. Health care workers are also reaching out more to community and consumer allies: such coordinated pressure recently forced the Sisters of Mercy, a Roman Catholic order, to change the board of directors at Mercy Community Hospital in Port Jervis, N.Y., thus rebuffing the board's attempts to use permanent replacements to thwart a nurses' strike for a first contract.

By focusing on patient care, the unions can serve the interests of both their members and the public. By defending a true community of interest between health workers and the public, unions can also set an example for the labor movement in challenging corporate priorities and redefining an industry away from an obsession with profit and toward the public interest. "The best defense is to offer a competing agenda," argues Richard Trumka, president of the Mine Workers and an advocate of more union-community coalitions. "We [in the labor movement] can become the voice of the patients." ▲

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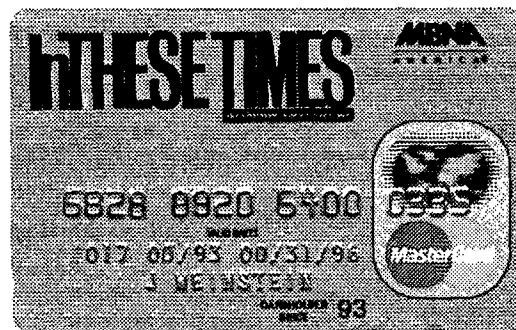
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## RELIGION

# Birth of a nation

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very day at noon the bells toll at Sarajevo's Catholic cathedral, followed by those of the Orthodox church around the corner. A few minutes later, the *muezzin* from the minaret of the Bascarsija mosque calls together the worshippers for prayer. In contrast to most of war-ravaged Bosnia, the spirit of tolerance that defined Sarajevo before the war persists among the Muslims, Serbs and Croats who still live here.

Even outside cosmopolitan Sarajevo, many Bosnians still cling to the ideal of a multicultural society, which is also the official line of the multinational Bosnian leadership.

But Bosnia is no longer the country it once was. Three years of war have dramatically altered Bosnia's ethnic composition, flooding government-

held territory—one-fifth of the original Bosnian state—with Muslim refugees while draining that space of Serbs and Croats. Growing voices in the Muslim community demand the bolstering of a Muslim national identity, which one day may underpin a national state. In the armed forces and police, as well as factions of the government, an ethnic nationalism with a strong Islamic element is emerging as an alternative to secular democracy.

Above all, Islam has begun to take hold within influential ranks of the military. Since the war's onset, the once-multinational Bosnian military has become an almost exclusively Muslim force. Many officers and soldiers now define the war in terms of the defense of the Bosnian Muslim people rather than of a multicultural society.

High in the mountains of north-eastern Bosnia, the Bosnian army's elite commando unit and presidential

guard, the Black Swans, has its barracks. In contrast to the often rag-tag regular army troops, the Black Swans are the Bosnian army's most disciplined and effective fighting force. The key to their success, says Commander Hase Tiric, is Islam. The 600-man Muslim brigade lives according to Islamic law—daily prayer, no alcohol or women, exemplary personal hygiene.

"We're not fundamentalists," says Tiric, a newcomer to religion like most of his soldiers. "These rules simply ensure the highest military standards."

The Black Swans are just one unit in the Bosnian armed forces that has taken Islam to heart. In part, the upsurge of religion in the military reflects a new interest in Islam among many Bosnian Muslims. The hardship of the war and the pressures of rampant nationalism around them have led ever more people to look to Islam for direction. Before the war, Bosnian Muslims were overwhelmingly secular, their fondness for drink and earthly pleasures legendary across former Yugoslavia. Today, mosque attendance is up as never before, religious education classes are full, and Arabic has become a popular second language to learn in high schools.

In the armed forces, young soldiers are eager to learn about Islam. The Black Swans receive two hours of religious training a day. "I am here to tell these boys what they're fighting for," says Hamza, the unit's *hodja*, or religious leader. "First they learn the rules of Islam and follow them, then comes faith."

Until recently, the Bosnian government has either denied or played down the existence of all-Muslim Islamic units,

*The dream of a secular state is receding as beleaguered Bosnians look to Islam for direction.*

By Paul Hockenos  
SARAJEVO

carefully concealing them from the international media. Even many Bosnians reacted with shock to the third anniversary celebration of the Seventh Muslim Brigade, the army's first and largest religious outfit. The event, televised from a packed sports hall in Zenica, featured cries of "Allahu Akbar!" or "God is great," delivered from columns of soldiers clad in olive-green uniforms and bright green headbands with Islamic insignia. Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic also appeared to inspect the 3,000 troops.

The controversy over the nation's increasingly Muslim character first entered the public spotlight the day after the Zenica celebration. Five members of the multinational seven-person Bosnian presidency, including the four Croat and Serb representatives, sent an open letter to Izetbegovic protesting his appearance as tacit approval of the Islamic brigades. The Islamic units implicitly contradict the government's multicultural philosophy. Until now, the Bosnian government has insisted that the Muslim majority, together with many Serbs and Croats, is fighting for a secu-

lar, multinational state.

But Izetbegovic testily defended the Muslim units: "Those who want to talk about the ideology of the Bosnian army should first count the graves." The reply underscored the fact that, numerically, the Bosnian Muslims are by far the war's greatest victims and that it is Muslim soldiers who are defending the country. According to military sources, the Bosnian army today is more than 90 percent Muslim.

The Serb and Croat generals in the Bosnian high command have become window dressing for the international community, maintain high-ranking Muslim officers. Likewise, they contend that the multinational presidency has outlived its political legitimacy: government-held Bosnia is a de facto Muslim state.

The dispute reflects a growing rift in the Bosnian leadership over the country's future. The Bosnian Serbs occupy more than two-thirds of the country. Realists admit that Bosnia will never exist again within its internationally recog-

nized borders. "Our first priority is that a state exists to defend the Muslim people of Bosnia," says Tiric. "The shape of its borders is another question."

Though they pay lip service to Bosnia's territorial integrity, Izetbegovic and his party, the Muslim nationalist Party of Democratic Action (SDA), seem to have accepted the inevitability of a truncated Muslim state, which Muslims will rule with a nationalist ideology and a solid power base in the military.

"This isn't about religion," says Tuzla's mayor, Selem Beslagic, a prominent Bosnian liberal. "It's a question of who controls the military—the SDA or the state. We're moving in a totalitarian direction, with the army under the control of a single, ruling party."

Muslim nationalists may say that the West has abandoned Bosnia, and that if Bosnia's Muslims are to survive, they must ally themselves more closely with their friends in the Islamic world. Countries such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran deliver a steady flow of small arms to the Bosnian army.

"It's become a self-fulfilling prophecy," sighs Igor Rajner, leader of the oppositional Union of Social Democrats. All along, the Serbs and the Croats contended that Bosnian Muslims were Islamic fundamentalists, he says. "Now that we have our backs against the wall and people see no other choice, Bosnia is indeed becoming an Islamic state. This is the nationalists' victory."

## Orthodoxy

In Bosnia, the fall of communism opened the way for a religious renaissance within all three religious communities. Yet the role that religion has played in the political process has varied greatly in each case.

In Serbia, the Eastern Orthodox Church backed nationalists' plans for a Greater Serbia from the beginning. Orthodox priests and bishops travel regularly to the front to bless Bosnian Serb soldiers before battle. On television, Patriarch Pavle, the church's highest cleric, urges the internationally isolated Bosnian Serbs to press on in "defense of God and Fatherland."

The Catholic Church in overwhelmingly Catholic Croatia maintains close relations with the conservative nationalist government of President Franjo Tudjman. In Bosnia, where about 800,000 Croats lived before the war, the Catholic hierarchy is split between liberal and nationalist wings, the latter of which openly backed the 1993-94 war of Bosnian Croat extremists against the Muslims.

In Bosnia, where Muslims made up almost half of the population before the war, Islam neither had the status of a national religion nor were significant forces in favor of it. Even today, on Sarajevo's streets, evidence of Islamic orthodoxy is hard to find. High heels and colorful mini-skirts are the fashion, alcohol flows freely, and pork is available in shop windows.

In central Bosnia, however, Islam is increasingly making its presence felt. The industrial city of Zenica is the stronghold of Bosnia's Muslim nationalist forces. In the past, between 5 and 10 percent of Bosnian Muslims actively practiced Islam, say religious authorities. Today, they estimate about half the Muslims in central and eastern Bosnia respect the basic rules of the religion.

According to the Serbian press, Bosnian *mujaheddin* are waging a *jihad*, or holy war, against Christianity. From the beginning of the war, Serbian propaganda charged that the Bosnian Muslims were Islamic fundamentalists, their state a strategic outpost for Middle Eastern radicals to penetrate Western Europe. In contrast to the aggressive, fundamentalist Islam in the Middle East, Bosnian Islam remains temperate and predominantly Western-oriented. This tradition is a legacy of the Ottoman Empire, under whose rule part of the region's Slavic population, now the Bosnian Muslims, converted to Islam.

—P.H.

**L ATIN AMERICA**

# Unjustifiable homicides

*The Colombian government has pledged to investigate human rights abuses. But the killing continues.*

By Karl Bermann

**I**n Colombia, murder is the leading cause of death. The country's per capita homicide rate is nine times that of the United States, the most murder-prone of the industrialized nations. The American media's focus on drug lords and cocaine cartels has created a widespread perception that Colombian violence is a by-product of the drug trade. But human rights watchers say that perception is largely false.

According to a report published last year by Amnesty International, more than 20,000 Colombians were killed for political reasons between 1986 and 1993. Although social and street crime accounts for most of Colombia's homicides, the annual body count for political violence now exceeds 4,000. Amnesty and other rights groups attribute most of those deaths to Colombian armed forces and the paramilitary groups spawned by them. A particularly gruesome case came to

world attention in February as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, an arm of the Organization of American States (OAS), held its semi-annual meeting in Washington. Between 1988 and 1990, the commission heard, soldiers and paramilitaries in the town of Trujillo tortured and then used chainsaws to massacre more than 100 suspected guerrilla collaborators. When an eyewitness, Daniel Arcila, traveled to Bogotá in April 1990 to report the shocking events in Trujillo, a judge sent him to see a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist declared Arcila to be a paranoid psychopath and the judge then dismissed the case. Arcila returned to Trujillo, where he was arrested by security forces in early 1991. He is now among the more than 2,000 Colombians "disappeared" over the last two decades.

The Trujillo massacre was only the most dramatic of the many cases involving Colombia to come before the OAS last month. Nevertheless, sources knowledgeable about the inner workings of the organization have expressed fears that the OAS human rights commission will soften its stance toward the country now that former Colombian President César Gaviria has become OAS secretary-general. The rights commission is not fully independent of the OAS secretary-general, and its present executive director has been criticized for weak leadership. "[The commission] is always subject to pressure—direct or indirect," remarked one observer. "There is no doubt that the large number of Colombians at the OAS is having some effect on processing cases involving Colombia." A year ago, before Gaviria assumed his post at the OAS, the commission published a report accusing Colombia of "political genocide." The report detailed how the Patriotic Union, a coalition party formed by left-wing groups in 1986, had been effectively destroyed after more than 1,500 leaders and supporters were murdered by security forces. Many of those murders—along with many other human rights abuses—occurred during Gaviria's presidency, which ended last year.

In Colombia, Gaviria's successor, President Ernesto Samper, has pledged to improve his country's human rights record. In September, by agreement with the OAS, Colombia established a joint commission composed of government representatives and independent human rights groups to investigate the events in Trujillo. The commission's report, released at the end of January, confirmed Arcila's original account and strongly criticized the government's handling of the case. Breaking with the policy of his predecessors, who blamed rights abuses on guerrilla groups or drug traffickers, Samper acknowledged government responsibility for the Trujillo massacre. But while Samper has sacked an army intelligence officer implicated in the killings, his government has yet to undertake prosecutions in the case.

Father Javier Giraldo, the head of Colombia's Intercongre-



gational Commission on Justice and Peace and one of the country's leading human rights advocates, says that for Samper to make good on his pledge to improve human rights, he must do more than accept government responsibility for abuses. Supported by rights groups both inside and outside Colombia, Giraldo is leading a campaign to have the perpetrators of the Trujillo massacre prosecuted and punished. In what Giraldo considers a victory for human rights, the OAS agreed to continue monitoring Colombia's handling of the Trujillo case until its next meeting in September.

Despite the lack of prosecutions in the Trujillo affair, Carlos Salinas, a Washington program officer for Amnesty International, says it is unprecedented for civilian officials in Colombia even to order an army officer discharged. "I personally think it's fantastic that the government is taking responsibility for what happened in a previous government," he said.

Others are still skeptical, however. "Even while the case of Trujillo was before the Inter-American Commission, we received faxes from Colombia saying that killings and human rights violations are continuing," said Cristina Espinel, head of the Colombia Human Rights Committee in Washington. According to Amnesty International's 1994 report, *Political Violence in Colombia*, Espinel has good reason to question Samper's sincerity. "Successive Colombian governments have largely escaped international criticism because of a skillful mix of political initiatives, public relations campaigns and the support ... of powerful allies for whom Colombia's strategic and economic significance is of far more importance than its human rights record," the report concluded.

Last year, Amnesty launched a major effort to publicize Colombian rights abuses. Sources of foreign aid and investment began to dry up, especially in Europe, after Amnesty, Americas Watch and the OAS all published negative reports on Colombia. "The pressure we were able to generate in conjunction with others sent a very strong signal to the incoming president," says Amnesty's Salinas. "The new administration in Colombia realized they could not ignore the human rights issue."

Recently, Amnesty and other groups waged a major campaign to have the U.N. Human Rights Commission appoint a "special rapporteur" to keep an eye on Colombia. Although the U.N. body turned down the proposal at its annual meeting in Geneva last month, the international attention is clearly raising the pressure on Colombia and its supporters. Even

the United States, Colombia's leading backer, has become critical. Last month, the State Department chided Colombia in its annual review of human rights, the second year in a row it has done so.

Hoping to assure Colombian cooperation in fighting drug traffickers, the Bush administration had kept mum on rights violations. Although Bill Clinton attacked Bush's "stop it at the source" drug strategy during the 1992 presidential campaign, the Bush policy toward Colombia has continued virtually unchanged since Clinton's inauguration. The two administrations have provided Colombia with nearly \$1 billion in military aid, more than any other country in the hemisphere. Although most of the aid officially is tied to the drug war, rights watchers say it often finds its way to counterinsurgency campaigns where the worst rights violations take place. Last year, Congress passed legislation requiring the administration to stipulate that military aid won't be used for counterinsurgency. But Carlos Salinas thinks stipulations won't make much difference. "There are no units of the Colombian army that perform exclusively counter-narcotics functions," he says. "Assistance that today might be used to destroy a cocaine lab, tomorrow might be used to wipe out a village." ◀

Karl Bermann is writing a book on U.S. relations with Colombia and other countries in the Caribbean basin.

## Air trafficking control

The complex relationship between U.S. policy and Colombian rights abuses comes to the fore in a dispute currently before the Organization of American States. An organization of Colombian indigenous groups is petitioning for removal of a U.S. radar base at Araracuara, in the Monochoa Indigenous Reserve. The base, deep in the Amazonian jungle near Colombia's border with Peru, was set up in 1992 to track planeloads of coca paste—the raw material of cocaine—that enter Colombia from Peru and Bolivia. It is operated by about 50 U.S. military personnel and guarded by 250 Colombian troops. Local tribes say the base violates autonomy agreements, pollutes water sources, and interferes with traditional hunting and religious practices. What makes the case unique is that it involves the United States directly in alleged rights violations.

The United States has shrouded its Colombian radar operations in secrecy, but it is known to operate several other sites besides the one at Araracuara. U.S. AWACS radar aircraft also overfly the region to monitor drug trafficking. The U.S. Embassy in Bogotá refuses comment, saying only that the controversy over the radar base is an internal matter for the Colombian government to handle.

Ironically, while radar interception has reduced the flow of coca into Colombia, Colombian growers have stepped in to take up the slack, and the country is now said to have surpassed Bolivia as the second-largest coca producer after Peru. The Colombian government, with U.S. support, has responded by launching a massive defoliation campaign in several provinces. U.S.-supplied crop dusters have blanketed the countryside with glyphosate, a herbicide marketed in the United States by Monsanto under the brand name "Roundup." Glyphosate is not recommended for aerial spraying, however, and Colombian environmentalists have criticized the campaign. In December, peasant growers struck back, setting fire to oil-storage facilities and staging other protests. The chain of events seems to confirm the view of some analysts that the U.S. approach to fighting drug traffickers in Colombia has done little more than increase the cycle of violence and the potential for rights violations and environmental damage.

—K.B.

## E D U C A T I O N

# Milwaukee's classroom struggle

A high-stakes political drama has begun in Wisconsin. In a Valentine's Day address to the Republican-controlled legislature, Gov. Tommy Thompson vowed to eliminate the limit on the number of poor children who can participate in Milwaukee's one-of-a-kind school voucher program. Currently, the program provides tuition vouchers for up to 1,500 low-income children so they can attend private, non-sectarian schools. Thompson also wants to change the rules of the program so children can use vouchers to attend religious schools. Although the program is now limited to Milwaukee, the outcome of this struggle will have implications for public education throughout Wisconsin and across the United States.

The story unfolding in Wisconsin features odd alliances—with Thompson, a third-term conservative governor, joining forces with the progressive Democratic mayor of Milwaukee, John Norquist. It also involves a complex racial and class subtext—the Milwaukee choice experiment was, in part, an effort to maintain neighborhood schools in the African-American community in the wake of court-ordered desegregation.



Not surprisingly, educational reform has emerged as the pivotal issue in Milwaukee's April 4 school board elections. What may be surprising to many In These Times readers is that the two candidates for the board's at-large seat—both lifelong progressives—have staked out differing positions on the issue. John S. Gardner, a longtime labor and education organizer in Milwaukee's central city, believes school-choice programs offer the only way out of the country's urban education crisis. Rose Daitsman, the former director of a pre-college program for minorities in engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, strongly opposes the school-voucher plan. Daitsman is endorsed by Progressive Milwaukee, the local New Party affiliate, and Gardner has received the backing of Mayor Norquist.

This election offers a crucial forum for debating what educational reforms progressives in Wisconsin—and across the country—should pursue. As a part of our continuing education series, "Notes from the Back of the Class," we have asked the two candidates to make their case to the readers of In These Times.

—Alex Molnar





# The best choice...

By John S. Gardner

Every morning on the corner opposite my home, 40 to 80 children—most of whom are African-American and some as young as 3 years old—huddle against Milwaukee's winter, waiting for school buses. They travel up to three hours and 80 miles a day to attend schools white enough to afford them racial integration.

The system isn't just cold. It's dangerous. School buses and bus stops have become a primary recruiting ground and retail space for armed youths who sell drugs. Every day students step off buses to be greeted by groups of adolescents waiting for a sale, a recruit, a fight, or worse.

More than anything, it is watching my neighbors' children and listening to their parents talk about the daily ter-

rors of getting to and from school that has made me rethink the issue of "school choice," and, ultimately, to run for the Milwaukee School Board. Most of my neighbors are people of color, and most could be described as the working poor. They have worked hard to take back our neighborhood from absentee landlords and drug dealers. But their desire to provide a decent education for their children seems as unrealizable as ever.

Life is difficult for my neighbors, and access to a "good" school can mean more than a good education. Up and down my block, virtually every family has sent at least one child to independent or religious schools. They choose these schools because they are safer, closer to home and, on the whole, superior. All too often they are driven from the public school system by frustration with bureaucratic hassles and institutionalized prejudice. My neighbors have been able to make such choices because of Milwaukee's experimental school choice program, which provides tuition support to a limited number of low-

income children so they can attend independent schools.

The choices my neighbors make contradict some of the most cherished "progressive" ideas about education—that private or religious education necessarily promotes elitism. Progressive orthodoxy dictates that my neighbors should keep their children in government schools. They should challenge the public school system to address problems such as poor security, inferior teachers and a lack of afternoon recreation programs. By making it possible for people like my neighbors to opt out of the public education system, the argument goes, our society abandons its struggle for an inclusionary, equitable democracy.

But the fact is that school choice policies are compatible with the values that the left holds dear. The benefits of school choice ought to be as compelling to progressives as the benefits of a single-payer health-care system. Single-payer health insurance eliminates the insurance industry's diversion of funds that can, and should, go directly to real health expenses. Similarly, single-payer education would let money go directly to teachers and schools, rather than funding dysfunctional bureaucracies that everyone knows



impede education more than they support it.

Of course, many public school teachers and administrators are making valiant efforts to improve inner-city schools. In Milwaukee, some formerly declining neighborhood schools now imitate successful magnet schools, developing appealing curricula, recruiting enthusiastic teachers and giving parent boards real power. The school board is trying to decentralize funding and authority and to give parents and communities a serious stake in governing their schools. In several public elementary schools, progressive teachers and principals have pushed for approaches generally associated with independent and religious education—parent investment, managerial responsiveness and staff committed to students.

Such efforts, however laudable, are not enough. The bureaucratic obstruction of these special programs means that most of Milwaukee's poor children won't have access to these options. At the same time, the safe, effective, high-quality schools long operated by religious denominations are fast disappearing from the inner city.

My family doesn't face these problems directly. My children will probably find their way into public magnet schools. If they can't, I can buy their way into the suburbs, or swallow my anti-religious biases and send them to the elite Jesuit high school four blocks from my home. The majority of progressives who decry school choice probably have the same options I do. But that rarely stops them from condemning programs that would offer poor families similar choices. Progressives engage in the school choice debate with the same intolerance that conservatives show in matters of foreign policy. They act as if even the most benign deviation from the party line reflects disloyalty, not only to public education but to the entire constellation of goals and values surrounding it.

It is long past time for the American left to acknowledge the progressive possibilities of school choice. Many industrial nations that are socially more progressive than ours—Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Israel, Australia and New Zealand among them—have already established school choice alternatives that have improved academic quality, maintained labor standards and promoted class and racial equity. In most of these nations the struggle for school choice has been led not by conservatives or religious denominations but by trade unions and labor parties representing the needs and interests of their members.

New Zealand, for instance, requires all schools—governmental, independent and religious—that receive tax payments to adhere to national wage and benefit standards. New Zealand teachers who transfer from one city to another, or among government and non-government school systems, retain seniority and wages and can transfer health insurance and pensions. Direct payment to the country's schools has permitted an extraordinary managerial revolu-

tion: school districts have been all but eliminated. Money once spent on centralized bureaucracy is being sent directly to schools, freeing up funds to pay teachers, improve services and generate real autonomy at the local level.

Interestingly, the pernicious consequences that progressives now predict will result from school choice in America have simply not occurred in other countries. There has been no mass exodus from government schools. No religious



denominations have come to control any country's educational system. And no free-market hucksters have succeeded in establishing profit-making schools in any of the nations that afford school choice.

Researchers are not yet certain what effect school choice has had in those countries where it has been implemented. But one result is clear—progressive school choice has provided real options to poor families. In Milwaukee, the current experimental school choice program, and legislative proposals to expand it, provide funds only to Milwaukee's poorest parents. It's the kind of program—open, tolerant, decentralized, constituent-driven—that ought to appeal to American progressives. But it doesn't. And my progressive friends and colleagues regard my confidence in such possibilities as naively utopian and deviously cynical.

Left only to conservative boosters, school choice *will* dismantle public education, bust unions, lower wages, eliminate benefits and accelerate segregation by class as well as race. But that will only happen if no progressive pro-school choice coalition asserts itself. Two agendas are now being pitted against each other—school choice for the urban poor

vs. radically expanded support for public education. We must stop thinking of these as mutually exclusive ideas.

But doing so means we will have to confront the bigotry inherent in our determination to decide for other people—and especially for the poor—what they should want for their children. And we need to rethink the role that religion plays in the lives of poor families who are raising their children in dangerous cities.

Ultimately, it comes down to some very simple questions. Are we going to hold poor people hostage to our own vision of society? Or are we willing to let them have their own?

In the long run, solutions to our national school crisis lie outside the schools—in establishing workplace fairness, racial equity, equitable taxation and effective social programs, the agenda for which progressives have struggled throughout the century. But my neighbors aren't raising their children in the long run. Like every parent, they're raising them today, day by day. ◀

## ...is no "choice" at all.

By **Rose Daitsman**

**A**cross the country, conservatives are using populist rhetoric to push unpopular social policies. The conservative rationale for gutting the school lunch program—that it would cut the federal bureaucracy and foster local accountability and decision-making—is a classic example of this doublespeak in action. The rhetoric surrounding school vouchers is no different.

Voucher proponents have capitalized on quite legitimate concerns over education. But they are using the seductive rhetoric of "choice" to foster a marketplace approach to education that will have disastrous consequences for anyone concerned with promoting equality in this country.

For over 20 years I have worked on a program in the Milwaukee public schools that helps prepare urban youth for careers in math and science. I know first-hand the problems that our students and our schools face. And as a woman engineer, I know the importance of bolstering educational opportunity for all, particularly those traditionally marginalized in society. That is why I am running for the Milwaukee School Board. And that's why I oppose vouchers.

Reform is a difficult task. It requires the transformation of our education system—which involves everything from increasing parent and community participation in decision-making to eliminate student tracking, a process that puts

some children in solid academic programs while consigning others to vocational paths. It also involves increasing the numbers of teachers of color and expanding community support for schools. This effort will necessitate a radical change in national priorities. As long as this country cares more about building prisons than it does about building schools, the children in our urban schools will lose.

Voucher advocates rarely talk explicitly about vouchers or privatization. Instead, they use the rhetoric of choice. But I believe it is essential that progressives look beyond the rhetoric to the substance of what is being proposed.

The current voucher movement traces its beginnings to the work of conservative economist Milton Friedman. Friedman, writing in the early '50s, argued that all families be given a voucher that could be used at any school meeting rudimentary standards. When they were first advanced, Friedman's ideas generated little support. But then came the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision outlawing segregated public schools, and suddenly the idea of vouchers became more popular—particularly among those who hoped to maintain de facto segregation outside of public schools. In fact, the first choice program in the country was implemented in Virginia, where white parents used vouchers to send their children to private academies so they would not have to go to integrated public schools with their black counterparts.

Tainted by the association with white supremacy, the idea of vouchers never attained more than regional success—until the late '80s, when vouchers took on a new life, partly due to the conservative resurgence associated with President Ronald Reagan. This time, vouchers came clothed in populist rhetoric, promising parent choice and increased opportunities for low-income children, in particular for children of color. The main financial backers of the voucher movement, however, have always been conservative foundations and corporations.

Critics of vouchers have long argued that vouchers are a way to support schools that serve middle-class and more affluent families. The recent conservative upsurge, replete with attacks on public institutions and on government funding for programs serving poor and minority communities, bolsters these suspicions.

Vouchers are also linked to a right-wing ideology that views poor and minority people as less worthy, less intelligent and less moral than their white middle-class counterparts. In their recent book *The Bell Curve*, for example, Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray strongly support vouchers. *The Bell Curve*, which suggests that the majority of African-Americans are incapable of benefiting from education, also explicitly argues that less money should be funneled into education programs serving disadvantaged students and more money poured into programs for the "gifted and talented." Not surprisingly, such "gifted and talented" students tend to be overwhelmingly white and middle class.

Not all who support "school choice" would support such notions. But those who toy with the idea of vouchers



as a solution for the problems of our public schools must confront the historical and political context in which the idea of vouchers has emerged.

Vouchers would replace our vision of public schools for all children with a marketplace approach to education. According to this logic, one enters the education marketplace in search of the best that money can buy. In the marketplace, some people can buy steak and some can buy ground beef, and there may not be disastrous social consequences to such choices. But education is the foundation of democracy, and it makes a real difference if some, and not others, get the choice cuts.

Despite all the problems in our schools, in many ways they are more egalitarian than any other institution. School is one of the few places where people come together from different backgrounds and, at least in theory, can learn to play, work and debate together.

Rather than abandoning the concept of public education and turning to vouchers and privatization, we should fight to ensure that our local, state and federal governments provide our schools the money and resources they need to do their job. The marketplace has never been capable of adequately addressing social issues—just look at the number of hungry, unemployed and homeless people in this country—and there is no reason to think it would do a better job in the schools.

This country already suffers from savage inequalities in its schools—with well-funded, quality schools in affluent communities, and underfunded, inadequate schools in urban and rural areas. Vouchers would only exacerbate this problem.

When voucher proponents talk of choice, they never mention that choice goes both ways. It's not just a matter of parents choosing a private school, but of private schools choosing students. And the private school always has the last say. Parents may "choose" a private school; but if they don't have the money to pay the tuition, or if their child does not have a high enough grade point average, or if their student has special educational needs, or if the child is not of the proper religious background, then the school can reject the student.

Public schools, on the other hand, must educate all students. To provide tax dollars for private schools is to condone the establishment of a two-tiered system of education—a private system that may exclude students and thus select whom it will teach, and a public system that must take all.

Vouchers would funnel money away from public schools into private schools. Those who advocate vouchers often do so as a way to wiggle out of tough decisions about providing more money and resources to urban schools. And voucher proposals almost always rely on taking money away from public schools in order to help pay for the vouchers. Here in Milwaukee, for example, Gov. Tommy Thompson hopes to fund religious schools with money taken directly out of funds currently set aside for the deseg-

regation program in the Milwaukee public schools.

Vouchers for religious schools also violate the constitutional guarantee of separation of church and state. Taxpayers should not be forced to finance religious schools with values that may differ profoundly from their own. Religion is an inherently private matter and should remain so. It must not be entangled with government support or intrusion.

Vouchers, in essence, are a form of taxation without representation. Private schools are not accountable to the public. Under the voucher schemes, public money will support private schools—but taxpayers will have absolutely no say in how these schools are run.

Here in Wisconsin, for example, private schools are not required to meet basic accountability standards such as the state's Open Meetings and Records Law, or to make public their financial audits. Nor do they have to release their dropout rates, test scores, employee wages and benefits, or the racial or gender breakdown of their students. At a time when the public is clamoring for increased accountability from the schools, vouchers would only decrease public input and accountability.

Many people genuinely concerned with the education of low-income children are considering the voucher system. They are overwhelmed by the enormous problems facing our urban schools and neighborhoods and are enticed by a rhetoric critical of bureaucracy and government monopoly. But the real forces behind the voucher movement are not interested in promoting grass-roots democracy—instead, they want the complete privatization of education based on a marketplace approach.

In the math and science program in which I have been involved, we maintain high standards of academic achievement and expect a high level of participation from students. But we have never made grade point average or previous attendance records a requirement for admission. We believe children will perform at high levels if we have high expectations. All children should be given equal access to academic excellence.

Our successes bear out this philosophy. In the program, we have a 95 percent attendance rate and 90 percent of the participants are prepared for post-secondary education when they graduate from high school.

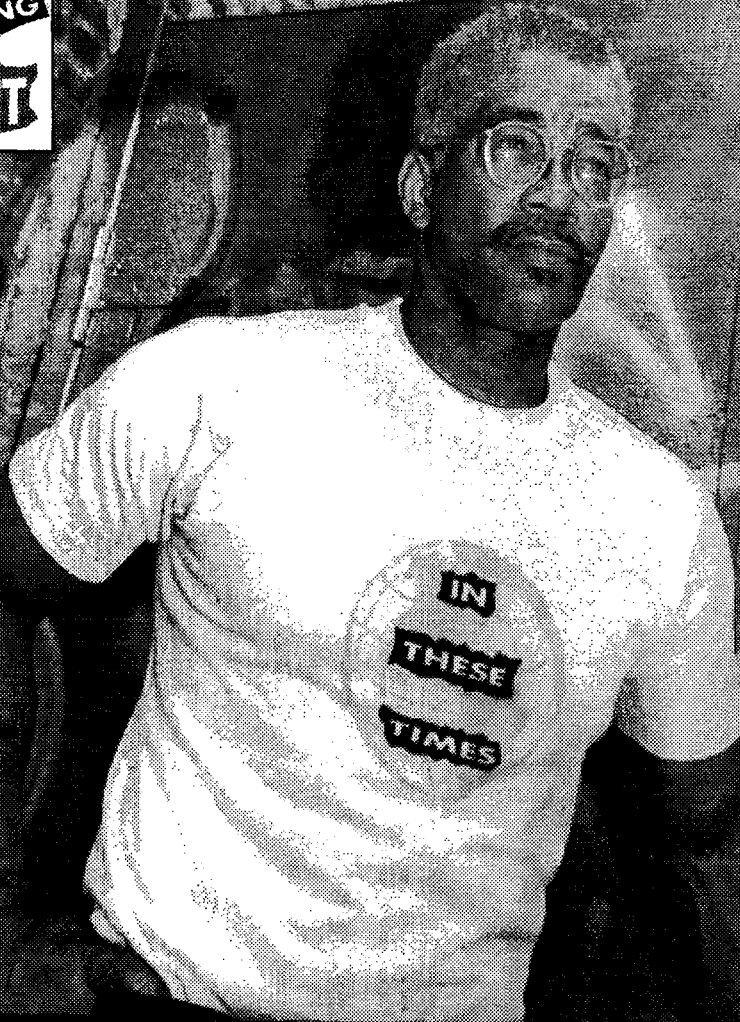
If we wish to provide true choices for our children, we must defend our public schools and maintain our commitment to equal educational opportunity for all. Vouchers, while couched in the rhetoric of choice, will only limit choices in the long run and allow the marketplace to rule our schools.

Earlier in this century, educator John Dewey argued that a strong public school system was central to the health of democracy. His words still ring true today. "What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children," Dewey wrote. "Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy."

◀  
*Rose Daitsman wishes to thank Barbara Miner for help in preparing this article.*



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PHOTO BY DAVID SCHULZ

## I N T H E A R T S

## Loaded images

**S**ome movies never go away. They haunt the memory, lurking in the culture's quieter corners gathering dust and devotees, waiting not for the tired old strokes of nostalgia but for a kind of painful recognition that they went straight to the heart of things—and still do. In 1969 there were two such movies, *The Wild Bunch* and *Medium Cool*, and in 1995 both of them are back, looking better—and truer—than ever.

*A quarter - century after they were first released, The Wild Bunch and Medium Cool are fresher than ever.*

By Pat Dowell

Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*, the Western that brought an unprecedented verisimilitude to the depiction of gun violence, is once again playing in theaters, and Haskell Wexler's *Medium Cool*, a movie about the numbing effects of television, is back on videocassette—which means, of course, that you have to watch it on television. That's an irony worth savoring.

Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*, the Western that brought an unprecedented verisimilitude to the depiction of gun violence, is once again playing in theaters, and Haskell Wexler's *Medium Cool*, a movie about the numbing effects of television, is back on videocassette—which means, of course, that you have to watch it on television. That's an irony worth savoring.

And so is the fact that *The Wild Bunch* has had to fight its battle against the heavy, nervous hand of censorship all over again in the '90s. This bloody story of a band of desperate American outlaws in insurgent Mexico in 1913 went through eight negotiations with the ratings board of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) when it was released in 1969. It finally got an R.

When Warner Bros. decided to rerelease the movie on its 25th anniversary last year, restored to its original 1969 length, some dim bulb at the studio decided this cut of *The Wild Bunch* should be resubmitted to the MPAA for a rating. Guess what? In the era of Stallone and Schwarzenegger and Tarantino, when slasher horror flicks sail through with an R, the ratings board slapped an NC-17 on *The Wild Bunch*. Warner Bros. appealed; the ratings board dug in its heels. Since NC-17 movies can't get advertising space and theaters—and, most importantly, are blackballed by video chains—Warner Bros. canceled the birthday party.

The standoff finally came to an end when an enterprising Peckinpah biographer, David Weddle, urged the studio to insist to the MPAA that the film had already been rated—in 1969. And so late last fall, embarrassed by press coverage of this fiasco, the MPAA decided that, yes indeed, *The Wild Bunch* already had an R rating. And so it's in the theaters again.

That after all these years *The Wild Bunch* can still manage to offend the anonymous cross-section of America that sits on the ratings board is a testament of sorts to the power of Sam Peckinpah's bloody masterpiece. Unlike the typical shoot-'em-up, this is a film that takes violence seriously. From its opening massacre, in which a gaggle of priggish innocent bystanders is caught in the crossfire between the Bunch and a posse of ambushing bounty hunters, to the final Armageddon in which the Bunch blows to hell a counter-revolutionary general and his enclave—taking themselves out in the process—*The Wild Bunch* is an anguished portrait of violent men in despair and in decline. And, by analogy, of a violent nation at the end of its rope.

Filmed in 1968 in Mexico, while at home assassinations and riots were ripping through America, *The Wild Bunch* seemed a pure expression, a white-hot epiphany, of what this country in its heart of darkness had been all along. Peckinpah subverted the Western's glowing myth of an America founded in justice, with a mission to spread civilization to savage lands. With the kind of majestic contradictions you expect in a great work of art, Peckinpah at the same time lamented the passing of this myth. *The Wild Bunch* is an elegiac howl of pain and self-knowledge.

*The Wild Bunch* is about angry white guys who see their patrimony heading south, so it should surprise no one if it



finds an audience today among angry white guys who identify with their pain but not with Peckinpah's subversion. Peckinpah looked into the depths of the coming backlash. The film's heroes have their own kind of glory for him, but he knew they were doomed for good reasons. History was not, despite what Newt likes to think about angry white guys, on their side.

A quarter-century later, *The Wild Bunch* seems to have hit on a perennial American dilemma. The Vietnam War is long over, and there are no longer riots in the streets, but the killing continues as never before. Murder seems the one true American vocation. Peckinpah defended the electrifying violence in his movie, captured in bloody detail and with a daring use of variable speeds and quicksilver cuts, as an attempt to demystify movie violence. He said he wanted to show "what the hell it was like to get shot." But of course what Peckinpah did not anticipate was how completely the media's copious feast of horrific images would dull our senses.

Any horror can be tamed by capturing it with a camera and showing it repeatedly (that's the specialty of television), and in this respect, Haskell Wexler's *Medium Cool* seems almost a companion piece to *The Wild Bunch*, almost a riposte to Peckinpah's nihilism. Not that this story of a television cameraman in 1968 ends with everyone living happily ever after—but I won't spoil it for you. See for yourself; that might well be the motto of the movie. Wexler, the Oscar-winning cameraman and progressive political activist, put himself into the movie in the figure of a TV newsgatherer who starts out excited solely by his craft, and who only gradually begins to notice what's coming through his lens.

Wexler fought the gaudy fictions of Hollywood in his own way, not (as Peckinpah did) by recreating a reality ignored by his predecessors, but by letting reality and fiction mix it up together. He put his cast in the thick of things. He visits a National Guard dress rehearsal for riot control. His cameraman covers the funeral of Robert Kennedy, where he chillingly notes how carefully scripted the media portrayal of such national emotional "drain-offs" really is. And Wexler puts his actors (and himself) right in the middle of the protests in the streets of Chicago during the Democratic Convention in 1968. "Look out, Haskell—it's real!" is the cry you hear on the soundtrack as the tear gas overcomes our intrepid director with his hand-held camera. It still echoes from the '60s as one of that decade's supreme moments of self-discovery and, yes, adventure.

*Medium Cool* has lost none of its freshness in the inter-

vening years, although some of the line readings and performances still strike me as a bit awkward—as though the director were impatient to get on to the ferment of real life. How prescient it all seems now. There are cocktail-party debates on crime and the responsibility of television, angry African-Americans buttonhole a cameraman with complaints about the 15 minutes he wants to spend getting a superficial take on their story, a single mother from West Virginia struggles to keep her boy fed and away from street crime, and a group of white middle-class suburbanites prac-



tice self-defense on the pistol range. The shooting gallery owner, actor Peter Boyle, looks at the camera and asks with a chuckle, "Is that thing loaded?" You bet it is, in Haskell Wexler's hands.

Who makes movies like *Medium Cool* or *The Wild Bunch* today? Peckinpah died in 1984, and his many imitators offer cartoony caricatures of his originals, without his technical artistry or his sul-furous vision. Haskell Wexler still hoists a camera for other directors (*The Secret of Roan Inish* being the most recent example), and he continues making documentaries. (He and his camera have just returned from Chiapas.) But Hollywood is much less adventurous than it was in 1968, when the industry was floundering around looking for a way to connect to a younger generation it didn't understand. Now Hollywood's marketers think they know all they need to about Americans of all ages. These two movies remind us that they don't.

**The Wild Bunch**  
Directed by Sam Peckinpah

**Medium Cool**  
Directed by Haskell Wexler



# I N P R I N T

## Steinbeck country

By Ted Kleine

When John Steinbeck died in 1968, his literary reputation was on the wane. Critics considered him a relic of the Depression, a proletarian writer who had produced a few striking "documents of protest," most notably *The Grapes of Wrath*, then lapsed into frivolity and nostalgia with such books as *The Short Reign of Pippin IV* and *Cannery Row*. But popularity is a writer's greatest revenge against his critics, and Steinbeck has always had a robust following. His books still sell 700,000 copies a year. *Of Mice and Men* has been filmed three times (most recently in 1992, with Gary Sinise and John Malkovich) and is required reading in countless high school English classes.

In his new biography, poet and novelist Jay Parini approaches Steinbeck not as a critic but as a disciple trying to recreate as much of his master's life as possible. He visited the author's widow, Elaine, who still lives in the New York City apartment where Steinbeck died. He drove from Oklahoma to California along the same highway the Joads traveled in *The Grapes of Wrath*. "I ... sat in Steinbeck's various studies and looked out the windows he looked out, trying always to imagine the world as he would have seen it," Parini writes in his preface. In a narrative as sure as any of Steinbeck's, Parini gives us the story of a big, shy, earthy man with a great gift for friendship, a writer who devoted the early part of his career to working toward a "big book," which turned out to be *The Grapes of Wrath*, then was mellowed by the fruits of fame, success and America's postwar prosperity.

The life so wonderfully animated here began in 1902 at 132 Central Avenue in Salinas, Calif., a little "lettuceburg" set in a fertile valley about 20 miles from the Pacific Ocean. The house, an ornate Victorian dwelling with a turret and a white picket fence, was proof that the Steinbecks were solid burghers, part of the local establishment later portrayed so grotesquely in *The Grapes of Wrath* and *In Dubious Battle*.

The Steinbecks were indulgent of their literary son. Even after John dropped out of Stanford, his father provided him a \$25-a-month allowance so he could pursue his writing.

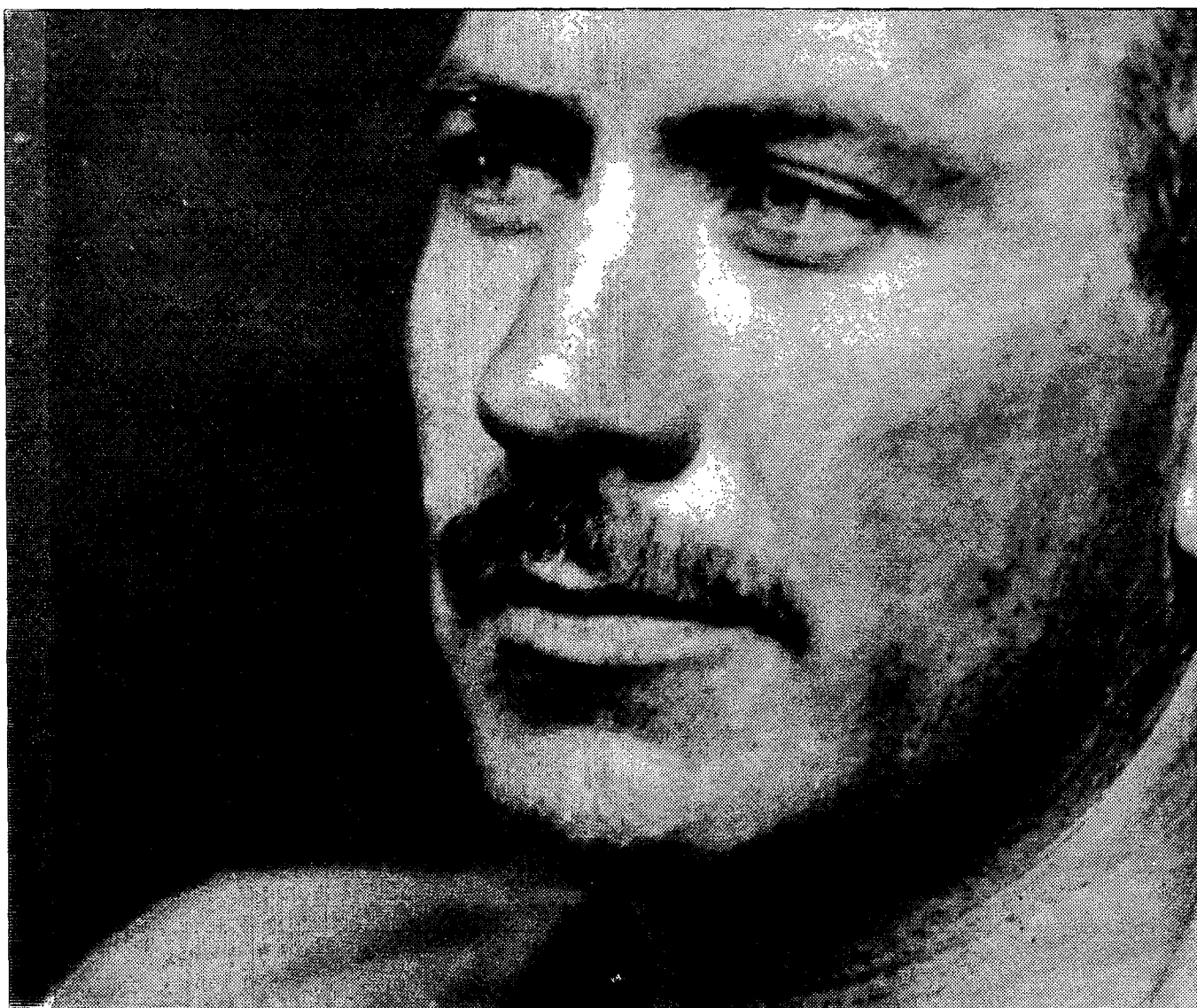
Steinbeck lived in Monterey County on and off until the mid-'40s. He often spent his afternoons wandering among the canneries of Monterey and hanging out with the prostitutes, fishermen and bums who would appear as characters in *Tortilla Flat*, *Cannery Row* and *Sweet Thursday*. And it was in Monterey that he met the man who would become his best friend and greatest literary influence. Ed Ricketts, a marine biologist who made his living collecting specimens in the tide pools of Monterey Bay, was the inspiration for seven Steinbeck characters, most notably Doc in *Cannery Row*. Steinbeck sat in Ricketts' laboratory almost every night, listening to his scientific friend philosophize on man's relation to nature and his idea that every man acts both as an individual and as a "cell" of a larger group, or "phalanx."

"The fascination with the inevitable conflict between the individual qua individual and the individual as part of a larger social unit" was examined in novel after novel, Parini writes. Mac, the leader of an apple-pickers strike in Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle*, is willing to sacrifice strikers' lives to beat the Growers' Association. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, the "selfish and family-oriented Joads ... come to realize that their involvement in the larger group migration is essential to their survival and, ultimately, to the survival of the race."

Steinbeck considered *The Grapes of Wrath* the crowning achievement of his first decade as a writer, during which, working prodigiously, the young writer produced nine books, including *The Pastures of Heaven*, *Tortilla Flat*, *Of Mice and Men* and *The Long Valley*. Each was a step toward what would be his masterpiece. "[The] millions of words written, all the short stories, even the ones that weren't any good," had given him the training to write his "big book," he once said. Steinbeck gathered his material while researching a series of articles on migrant camps for the *San Francisco News*. When he visited the camp outside Salinas, he was especially dismayed. "It's a rotten and depressing situation here," he wrote to a friend. "This isn't the place I knew as a boy."

Returning to his home in Los Gatos, Steinbeck sat down and drafted *The Grapes of Wrath* in only seven months, so intent on his work that friends thought he was holding a séance with pen and paper out in his garden. "If only I could do this book properly, it would be one of the really fine books and a truly American book," he wrote near the outset.

Even before *The Grapes of Wrath* came out, Steinbeck was being called a "known Communist and Red sympathizer" by right-wing California businessmen, who passed this assessment on to every sheriff in the state. *The Grapes of Wrath* was banned by school boards all over the country, and a luncheon was held in a San Francisco hotel to condemn Steinbeck. Congressman Lyle Boren of Oklahoma called the book "a lie, a black, infernal creation of a twisted,



### John Steinbeck: A Biography

By Jay Parini

Henry Holt & Co.

536 pp., \$30

and it was made into a hugely successful movie starring Henry Fonda. "If only a couple million overcomfortable people can be brought to read it, John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* may effect something like a revolution in their hearts," critic Malcolm Cowley wrote.

The writing—and the enormous success—of *The Grapes of Wrath* exhausted Steinbeck. Never again would he summon such energy for his work. After *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck's publisher appealed to him for another great novel, but "Steinbeck withdrew, clamlike, into a shell," Parini writes. "The novel as a genre, he argued, 'was over' and no longer seemed of interest to anyone. In truth, he was frightened by his own success and mistrustful of the clamor

distorted mind."

On the other hand, Eleanor Roosevelt plugged *The Grapes of Wrath* in the press, it won the Pulitzer Prize

made by the press." Steinbeck spent most of his remaining career dabbling in various literary genres: films, plays, travelogues, TV scripts, even a Broadway musical.

Steinbeck followed *The Grapes of Wrath* with *The Sea of Cortez*, a book on marine biology co-written with Ed Rickerts. He then devoted his pen to the war effort, turning out *The Moon Is Down*, a novel about a village that resists its fascist occupiers. Although hardly great literature, the book became a rallying point for partisans fighting the Nazis in Denmark, Norway and France. Later in the war, Steinbeck went to Italy as a war correspondent.

After the war, Steinbeck left California, although he would continue writing about what was coming to be called "Steinbeck Country." *Cannery Row*, which appeared in 1945, made him a pariah in Monterey, whose residents thought the book's descriptions of low life along the waterfront gave their town a bad name. Landlords would not rent Steinbeck office space, his gas supply was cut off, the city refused him permission to repair his house,



and everyone but Ed Ricketts seemed to be giving him the cold shoulder.

(Now, of course, Monterey is a virtual Steinbeck theme park. Ocean View Avenue, site of the canneries, has been renamed Cannery Row and is lined with knick-knack shops with such names as Sweet Thursday. There is even a Steinbeck Federal Credit Union.)

*Cannery Row* also marked a change in Steinbeck's literary interests. Although the book attacks materialism by celebrating the lives of a group of kindly bums, it is much too lighthearted to be called a protest novel. Indeed, all the books that came after the war were vastly different in tone from Steinbeck's Depression novels: sunnier, more likely to celebrate the individual. Steinbeck's passion for social realism had disappeared.

Why had Steinbeck's writing changed so dramatically? One reason, Parini suggests, is that America itself had changed. In writing *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck found it necessary to rail against the selfish individualism that had led to the cataclysm of the Depression. By the '50s, though, Steinbeck saw a need to protest "the maniacal conformity of the postwar years."

The American working class prospered in the '50s, robbing Steinbeck of many of the themes that had driven his prewar fiction. The Dust Bowl was over, and businessmen were now meeting union leaders with handshakes instead of shotguns. Unfortunately, Steinbeck's response to this seems to have been to drop political protest altogether. When Elia Kazan, who directed the film version of *East of Eden*, agreed to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee, Steinbeck supported him, saying he hoped "Communists and second-raters" would not attack Kazan for his cooperation.

In his last novel, *The Winter of Our Discontent*, Steinbeck attacked the greed and spiritual emptiness of America in the early '60s. A small-town shopkeeper is forced to give up his old-fashioned ideals of honesty and fidelity and become a money-grubber to stay in business. The end of the book finds the shopkeeper in a cave, with a wallet full of cash, contemplating suicide. Parini considers it Steinbeck's best post-Depression novel. It is also, in its way, the most autobiographical. "One can hardly resist speculating that Steinbeck himself may have felt entrapped ... in reaching for the Mammon represented by Broadway and Hollywood," Parini writes.

As his wealth and fame increased and his ties with Monterey frayed, Steinbeck embraced the celebrity that the rest of the world was offering. He began spending more time in New York City and in Hollywood, where he dived into numerous film projects. Once he attempted to become a television producer and began writing a show called "Paris: Cavalcade of Fashion." Fortunately, it never aired. He met his third wife, Elaine Scott, when actress Ann Sothorn brought her along on a visit to Monterey.

Despite his success, Steinbeck always thought of himself as a big homely man from small-town California,

formed from common clay. In photographs from the '30s, he looks like a rube: jug ears, fleshy nose, bad haircut, black T-shirt worn under a calfskin jacket. He never felt his writing was very good, even when the world was calling it brilliant. "That the author of prose so definite and painterly could be so personally unsure was beyond my experience," wrote Arthur Miller, who considered Steinbeck "provincial."

Steinbeck was flattered by the attention of celebrities, most especially Lyndon Johnson, who often had Steinbeck as a guest at the White House. Steinbeck's loyalty to Johnson, and his strain of old-fashioned patriotism, made it difficult for him to speak out against the Vietnam War, even after he came to realize that the war was a mistake. He defended the president in columns he wrote for *Newsday*, and supported his son John IV when the young man enlisted. While Steinbeck was in Vietnam as a correspondent, he wrote to Johnson that the American soldiers there were "the best we have ever had."

Steinbeck was always a populist writer, and he believed that writers ought to be as much a part of the American grain as farmers or carpenters or mechanics. In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, Steinbeck said that "literature is not promulgated by a pale and emasculated critical priesthood singing their litanies in empty churches—nor is it a game for the cloistered elect, the tinhorn mendicants of low-calorie despair. Literature is as old as speech. It grew out of human need for it, and it has not changed except to become more needed."

The critics have answered Steinbeck's attack with neglect. Steinbeck, Parini notes, is the subject of only 15 or 20 scholarly works each year, while peers such as Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner are the topic of between 120 and 130. Steinbeck, the line goes, is kid stuff, OK for high school English classes but not worthy of serious scholarship.

"Steinbeck was never an original stylist, like Hemingway," Parini writes. "Nor did he possess Faulkner's commanding grasp of artistic design. Furthermore, he did not write in the tradition of modernism, which has been the focus of most academic inquiry."

Because of the "almost childlike simplicity" of his writing, Steinbeck is not, like Faulkner or Joyce or Eliot, full of puzzles for professors to solve. "Academic critics ... find little in his books to untangle or annotate," notes Parini.

But most readers don't look to novels for literary puzzles. My Penguin Books version of *Of Mice and Men* does not have a critical introduction. The volume belongs entirely to a master storyteller who in 107 pages brings to life a character, Lennie, whose death makes me weep after every reading. I don't cry a lot at the library, but maybe that's because few writers have put as much life onto the page as John Steinbeck did. ◀

Ted Kleine, a writer from Lansing, Mich., was a contributor to *Next: Young American Writers on the New Generation* (Norton).



# Money isn't everything

By Art Hilgart

How is it," Sir James Goldsmith asks, "that nearly two hundred years after the birth of the Industrial Revolution, which produced humanity's greatest period of economic expansion, the absolute number of those living in misery, both material and social, has grown exponentially?" This is a rather interesting question, especially considering its source. Goldsmith, a man who epitomizes the modern paper capitalist, accumulated a very large fortune before turning 50, mostly through corporate takeovers, stock speculation and generous rewards for *not* taking over companies. He consolidated his holdings and gave up business for politics in 1987, forming l'Autre Europe, a European Parliament coalition of assorted leftists and conservatives from several countries opposed to the growing power of Brussels.

If it seems a little out of the ordinary for an ex-Master of the Universe to rhetorically question the justice of capitalism in its golden age, that is because Goldsmith is himself a bit of an odd fish, a character of seemingly contradictory inclinations. A vigorous proponent of national distinctiveness, Goldsmith is himself cosmopolitan. French-born, Goldsmith observes with delight that the English think he is French and the French think he is English. While he describes his religious views as a blend of the Far East and Native American, he notes that Catholics think he is a Jew and Jews think he is a Catholic. A financial speculator, he was the darling of socialist prime minister Harold Wilson, who was ultimately responsible for Goldsmith's knighthood.

In *The Trap*, which reprises a series of interviews with Yves Messarovitch, the economics editor of *Le Figaro*, Goldsmith decries the brand of globalism now purveyed by transnational corporations and First World governments. It is a globalism that, in his view, subordinates human interests to the unlimited pursuit of profit by transnational corporations and that, through the indiscriminate use of technology, transforms people into disposable commodities.

Goldsmith questions a fundamental premise of orthodox economics, the idea that the primary objective of society is growth in gross national product (GNP). One pitfall

of endowing growth figures with too much evaluative significance, he notes, is that they can give a misleadingly incomplete picture. Any money transaction will boost GNP, regardless of whether it truly represents an augmentation of social well-being. Growth in prison building and nuclear waste disposal boosts GNP, as does transferring child care from families to paid workers. More importantly, GNP growth is indifferent to the distribution of wealth. Not only in the Third World but in England, France and the United States, poverty has grown along with GNP. Goldsmith blames this growing maldistribution of income in large part on free trade among nations and the industrialization of agriculture.

Traditionally, free trade theory has rested on Ricardo's principle that aggregate production and consumption are maximized when each country produces goods for which it is best suited. Nations with abundant coal resources, for example, should export steel because they can produce it more cheaply than countries without coal. A country's prosperity rests on its ability to identify and exploit such "comparative advantages." Goldsmith observes that this principle is becoming less relevant in modern economies because the important factors in modern comparative advantage—money and technology—are now universally transferable. International competition has thus been reduced to a search for cheap labor. The clothing trade illustrates his point: many "American" clothing manufacturers now move equipment back and forth between countries like China and Guatemala in their quest for the lowest costs. This competition for work creates downward pressure on wages globally—including those of workers in the First World—and brings in its wake the grinding poverty and urban slums so common throughout the world.

Part of the solution to this problem, says Goldsmith, is to allow the free movement of capital and technology, but not goods. If Ford wants to sell cars in Mexico, then it should be required to build plants in Mexico and make the cars there, with access to patents, know-how and funding from anywhere; the U.S. market, in the meantime, should be served with cars made in the United States by American workers. This may be in the strictest sense less efficient, but it serves the human needs of both countries. Mexican industry would have a chance to develop, and American labor would preserve its living standards and working conditions.

In modern economies, lower production costs do not necessarily lead to lower prices.



**The Trap**  
By Sir James Goldsmith  
Carroll & Graf  
207 pp., \$20

Patents, copyrights and trademarks confer monopoly pricing power on sellers, and the latest GATT agreements extend this control over prices globally. In an aside about pharmaceutical prices, Goldsmith recognizes this power of transnational corporations to set prices unilaterally, and he proposes instead the compulsory licensing of technology rights to potential competitors. Opening markets to several sellers would restore the basis for price competition.

The other principal cause of contemporary disruption, according to Goldsmith, is the rapid destruction of traditional patterns of agriculture. The spectacular increase in North American agricultural productivity in this century did not lead to less work and higher living standards for the rural population. Surplus workers were left to migrate to the cities, a difficult displacement that was moderated only by explosive growth in manufacturing industries. In the Third World, where industrial employment cannot begin to absorb displaced farmers, consolidation of land ownership and extension of modern agricultural techniques are devastating. Vast urban slums proliferate around the world, and Goldsmith predicts that current trends in rural depopulation will add another 2 billion people to the metropolitan shantytowns. In fact, we may witness the process directly in the next few years if, thanks to NAFTA's removal of trade barriers, cheap American corn destroys rural Mexico's economic base.

The goal of agricultural policy, Goldsmith concludes, should be the preservation of rural communities, with change introduced gradually to accommodate natural growth in urban employment. While Goldsmith criticizes industrial agriculture primarily for its baleful social consequences, he also notes that synthetic fertilizers, pesticides and chemically treated animals damage the environment and corrupt the food.

Related to Goldsmith's advocacy of economic self-sufficiency is his belief that political stability depends in large part on a respect for cultural integrity. Had he been Japanese, he would not have let Commodore Perry get off his ship. Goldsmith likens GATT to the conquistadors who plundered Latin America and the missionaries who followed them to destroy language, identity and religion. But his advocacy of community is not based on ethnocentrism or nostalgia. He argues that well-being depends first on the small community and secondarily on a nation where people share a common culture and sense of identity. He regards immigration as beneficial to people and nations, but opposes mass migrations that inevitably lead to hostility, intolerance and conflict.

Communities have economic importance as well, and Goldsmith opposes the transfer of power from the countries of Europe to the European Union. He bristles at outgoing

European Commission President Jacques Delors' boast that eventually 80 percent of all laws governing the social, economic and fiscal affairs of Europeans will originate in Brussels. A single currency would be particularly harmful, since healthy growth in some countries might be stifled by the monetary authority to fight inflation elsewhere.

There is a radical flavor to Goldsmith's views on labor—one expects him to come right out and say "alienation"—and secular humanism seems to underlie his general perspective. In the end, though, Goldsmith undercuts this brief flirtation with ideology to re-emphasize the value he places on the intelligent use of technology in support of human well-being in communities—communities seeking not domination over nature but harmony within it.

Many of us reluctant to abandon a faith in one world shared by one people will be troubled by Goldsmith's belief in the importance of cultural communities. The failure of several generations of imposed unity in Eastern Europe to obliterate ethnic hatreds, however, is a practical challenge to that hope. The examples of Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia and Chechnya tragically lend support to Goldsmith.

The real world continues to confirm Goldsmith's views on trade. The excellent publication of the Institute for Policy Studies, *NAFTA's First Year*, reports that Mexican concentration on production of food for export has increased rural unemployment while forcing up domestic food prices. Americans are not getting cheaper tomatoes (retail prices are controlled by processors and distributors), but American tomato workers are losing their jobs. While NAFTA advocates can find several hundred new American jobs that can be attributed to NAFTA, the authors identify several thousand that have been lost—just in the first year. (The report can be ordered by calling 202-234-9382.)

In *The Trap*, James Goldsmith grabs the purveyors of conventional globalism and unbridled capitalism by the lapels, forcing them to confront the realities of the world they've created. The book has its flaws: it's short on implementation and strategy, and many of its arguments have been advanced more thoroughly elsewhere. As a counter to the dangerous nonsense being peddled by the International Monetary Fund, though, it is valuable. Goldsmith's blending of related issues is as welcome as it is rare, and his background will gain him credibility among audiences unfriendly to radical views. One wishes there were a cheap paperback edition to send to members of Congress and the Clinton administration. It's short enough, at least, for their attention spans. ◀

**Art Hilgart** is a writer living in Kalamazoo, Mich. His work has appeared in *The Nation* and other publications.



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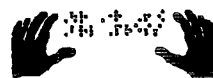
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*Continued from page 40*

I take delight in tweaking the humorless, eliciting outraged e-mail from total strangers I have somehow managed to annoy.

One late evening last December, struck by a sudden inspiration, I made a quick excursion to the America Online Animal Talk Forum disguised as RagsTheDog, arfing and woofing and generally annoying the humans online with my particular brand of animal talk. Another time, posing as a curmudgeonly elder, I posted a cranky message to the newsgroup alt.society.generation-x lamenting the poor work habits of today's youngsters.

You kids are such pathetic little whiners! When I was your age I didn't sit around like a damn SLACKER waiting for the world to get handed to me on a platter. I went out and WORKED.

And a lot of you youngsters have a bad case of what we used to call potty mouth. CLEAN IT UP if you want some real respect!

I thought it was a pretty obvious fake. But it inspired nearly a dozen angry posts, some of them virtual manifestos, from gen-x achievers convinced some old fart had unfairly impugned their generation. I felt a little guilty.

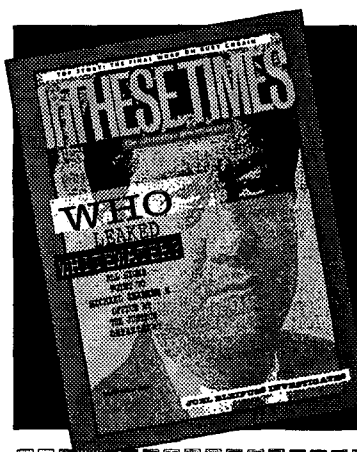
I've come to realize, though, that as online cranks go I am still but an amateur. Recently, while perusing through an odd little newsgroup called talk.rumors, I came across an intriguing little net phenomenon named Don Reynolds (alias D. Esq., alias the Jackal, alias Bat Head, alias Dr. Jackal Von Weirido)—the virtual incarnation of Internet Id.

Dr. Jackal first impressed himself upon my consciousness about a month ago with a series of posts on the dangers of e-mail love affairs. "Many once happily couples [sic] are now finding new sordid love affairs by using e.mail," the first post began. "But how secret are these sordid affairs? Doesn't [sic] the host computer administrator have the ability to monitor e.mail? I would like to have a sordid e.mail affair but am frightened by this dilemma! Many mamselles [sic] lie waiting for my sordid kiss! Please ease their fears!"

More recently, Dr. Jackal has moved on to consider the danger posed to humanity by bubbles in his toilet and to spark something of a flame war by referring to his fellow rumormongers as a "bunch of wierdos [sic] who live in this wierdo palace." He later apologized for the insult, more or less, and for his misspelling of "weirdo." ("My teacher in school told me I before E except after C except in Weirdo.")

I'd like to believe that Dr. Jackal is in fact an expert comedian, not merely a loon. But sometimes I'm not so sure. Whatever Dr. Jackal is, he is a phenomenon made possible only by the Internet. Forget Newt Gingrich's promises of cyber-utopia. Hell, forget Beavis and Butt-Head. Dr. Jackal is our future.

dimFLASH, David Futrelle's online magazine, can be reached via the World Wide Web at the URL <http://turnpike.net/metro/futrelle/index.html>.



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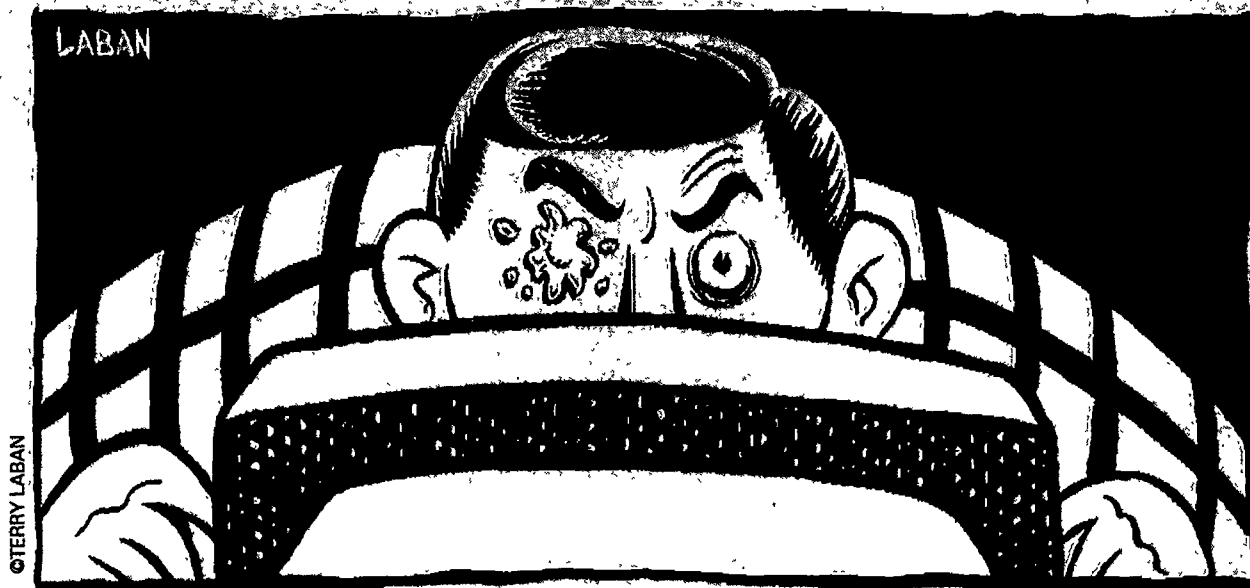
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**d**espite the glowing promises of newsmagazine cover stories and America Online ads, traversing the Internet often seems less like "surfing" than slogging through mud. It may take several tries before your online service or net provider answers your modem's call. Once online, you're likely to spend half your time lost, wandering from menu to menu in

off yet. I am online for several hours a day, dealing with a regular flood of e-mail from several mailing lists and various online companions, reading and posting to this newsgroup and that, linking up with computers from Boston to Belgium.

I've come to realize that far from being an insurmountable obstacle to a shining future, the pettiness, even the infantalism of net life is what gives it much of its charm. The net is less a glimpse into the future than a trip into the human psyche, a visit to the id.



search of who knows what, and much of the rest of the time waiting—for connections to be made, for words and images to download themselves to your screen.

And for what? Yes, the Internet can provide you, at the click of a mouse, with information from around the globe. But not much of this information is, by conventional standards, very interesting. It's amateur hour on the net. Once you get beyond the commercial sites and the university archives, much of what's out there has been put up on the net for no good reason by ordinary people as bored as you: it's like looking at the vacation slides of people you don't even know.

Within a matter of moments I can hook myself up to a computer system in Finland—to find pictures of the Simpsons and factoids about obscure heavy metal bands posted for public consumption by Finnish teenagers. I can look—more or less live—at a video image of a coffeemaker in Oxford.

Nowhere is the sheer self-indulgence of the Internet more apparent than in the sprawling metaverse of Usenet discussion groups. Hailed by cyber-utopians as a democratizing force, an up-from-the-grass-roots medium able to bypass the homogenizing forces of the corporate communications monopolies, these "newsgroups" (all 10,000 or so of them) are filled with the smallest of disputes, from the correct food to feed a lizard to the appropriateness of the term "cyberspace."

I'm as frustrated as anyone by the pettiness of life online. Yet I cannot, it seems, get enough of it. It's now some six months after I bought my first modem, and I haven't signed

## Cyber space between the ears

By David Futrelle

step or two removed from the proverbial sand pile.

My id has had a field day. It's hardly a coincidence that the newsgroups I turn to when first signing on every day are called alt.stupidity and alt.bitterness, that my posts have grown cruder the longer I've been on. I find myself involved in flame wars that are the very definition of infantile ("Blow it out your ass David." "Please be more specific. Blow \*what\* out my ass!").

*Continued on page 39*